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Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 14 September, 1932 Number 9

THE I.L.P. AND REVOLUTION

By R. P. D. and others

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

Reformism in Disintegration—Advance to Communism!—I.L.P. History—The Poison at the Root—Rejection of Marxism—The Real Guilt for Labourism—"Certain Results Were Inevitable"—Rejection of Communism, 1921—I.L.P. and Labour Party—"A Hopeless Task"—Living Wage Illusions—Communist Criticism—Who Was Right?—No Self Criticism—"Crisis-Revolutionism"—Yielding to Pressure—Opportunists Still—Leaders From Behind—Leading the Left to Strangle It—"Fundamental Conflict" or "Technicalities"?—The "New" "Revolutionary" Programme—"Definitely Marxist"—What is Marxism?—The State and Bourgeois Democracy—I.L.P. Parliamentary Ministerialism—Marxism and Revolution—I.L.P. Pacifist Trade Unionism—"Parliamentary Democracy, plus If"—Identity with Old I.L.P.-Labour Programme—Future Reunion?—To Left I.L.P.-ers.

STAGE by stage, the old forms of the British working-class movement are changing, and new forms are developing. The Bradford Conference decision last month of the Independent Labour Party, the original reformist socialist party in Britain and the main founder of the Labour Party, to make a formal break with the Labour Party and adopt a professedly "revolutionary" "Marxist" programme, is a sign of the times. For forty years the Independent Labour Party has fought Marxism, has fought revolutionary socialism, has preached its own opportunist line as the only correct line in Britain, and has proclaimed the path of the Labour Party and of the Labour majority in Parliament as the only path to socialism. To-day, where are all these theories? The merciless compulsion of hard facts, drumming dialectics into even the thickest skulls, has smashed this line, and compelled a drastic change of front. To-day the present Independent

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Labour Party breaks with the Labour Party, denounces the Labour Party, denounces reformism and reformist parliamentarism, and proclaims allegiance to Marxism, to revolutionary socialism. We are not concerned for a moment to exaggerate the value of the new professions and programme, which we shall have occasion to examine in some detail, and will find in the end to be remarkably like the old line in a new dress to meet new conditions. Nor would we wish to exaggerate the present importance of the Independent Labour Party, which has for some time been playing a diminishing rôle, and has shrunk from its former numbers to a membership of under twelve thousand (according to the Secretary, Paton, writing in *Forward* for August 13, the votes at Bradford, which numbered 389, represented 3.3 per cent. of the paid-up membership; this would give a membership of 11,750); and though it may have a temporary new blossoming on the basis of the new programme, it is manifestly destined to shrink still further between the Labour Party on the one hand and Communism on the other. But the Independent Labour Party has long been a factor in the British working-class movement; and the collapse of this old pillar of the reformist prison-house under the combined pressure of the capitalist crisis and of working-class discontent, and still more, the attempt to patch up and hide the collapse under cover of new "revolutionary" trappings, is a big sign of where the forces of the working class are moving. It is a further stage in the disintegration of reformism, which already characterised the crisis of 1931, with the heavy exposure of the Labour Party, and the first big fall of the Labour vote. *The breaking off of the I.L.P. from the Labour Party, and its proclamation of a "revolutionary" programme is the second step in this process of the disintegration of reformism.*

IT is a process which we who are revolutionary Marxists can welcome with understanding and with confidence. Thousands of young workers, themselves only the advance-guard of a future army, waves upon waves of new advance, are pressing forward, are compelling their leaders to mouth

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unfamiliar formulas, are rallying to the slogans of the independent political fight against capitalism and the Labour Party (remember how tiny was our minority when we first raised this cry nearly five years ago), to the slogans of revolutionary struggle, of mass struggle, of Marxism. *We are absolutely confident that all the best of these will come to Communism*, that a very great strengthening of the forces of Communism will be the final outcome. Of course there are dangers. We have no illusions about the leadership who repeat these slogans; they are pastmasters of manœuvre and deception, "old parliamentary hands," soaked in cynicism, scepticism and passivity, without an atom of revolutionary sincerity or serious political principle. The formulations and programmes in which these slogans are embodied are deliberately vague, confused and ambiguous, and framed, not to point the way and give clearness, but only to mislead; and their authors evade to the last any attempt to explain their meaning in definite, concrete terms. There is every danger, and every intention on the part of the chiefs of the manœuvre, to make what should be a transition into a stopping place, into an actual point of reaction. *But we can conquer these dangers.* All the cards are in our hands. If the Liberal-Christian nonsense which used to be the mainstay of I.L.P. propaganda is now disowned and in full rout, how much more easily shall we not deal with counterfeit "Marxism," against which we can bring the whole arsenal of Marxist argument at once into play to expose it in its true colours and compel the real Marxist conclusions. All the cards are in our hands. For the mass of the workers who follow these leaders are not insincere; when they respond with enthusiasm to the call for revolution, for mass-struggle, for workers' power, for the extra-parliamentary fight for socialism, they are affirming a serious wish and determination, even though they may not yet have thought very clearly about what this fight involves. And it is precisely here that we can help them, along the path of hard, comradely, ideological controversy, at the same time as we fight side by side in the immediate fight against capitalism. We regard these workers as our allies who are marching to join us, as

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future fellow-members in a single party. Having said this, let us get down to the battle, to the ideological battle that we must have out with them, in order to reach this future unity.

LET us begin, not with the immediate present controversies, but with a little survey of the line of development that has led to these issues. The Independent Labour Party was originally formed, so we read in all the conventional histories, in reaction against the doctrinaire Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation, which had proved itself wholly unsuitable to the British temperament; the new party was an attempt to evolve a more elastic socialism, free from doctrines, suited to the British temperament, and to build upon the existing working-class organisations, the trade unions, in order to reach a political working-class party. So far the conventional histories; and since they were all written before the present crisis, they end with a little note of triumph on the final discovery of the correct road for Britain, and the final disproof of Marxism as unsuitable for Britain. Recent developments may, however, make some a little more uncertain about this official complacency, and a little more ready to reconsider in the light of present knowledge these origins and the line of development that has led to the present outcome. For in fact the conventional histories, which are all written from the standpoint of a prosperous Labour Member of Parliament, are far from adequate; and the true history of the British working-class movement has still to be written.

THE formation of the Independent Labour Party contained in fact two elements, one most fruitful, and and the other most poisonous; and the poison unfortunately had power to kill the fruit. The fruitful element was the attempt to reach a wider mass basis, to build on the organised workers, to seek to draw the trade unions into political activity. So far from this element being in contradiction to Marxism, Engels had in fact in 1887 already outlined such a conception as the probably necessary line of advance in Britain—six years before the formation of the

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Independent Labour Party. Unfortunately, the only existing socialist organisation in England, the Social Democratic Federation, which was supposed to be Marxist (a myth that an examination of its programme would soon dispel, and indeed its leadership had been explicitly repudiated by both Marx and Engels), was so far from understanding Marxism, as to be wholly incapable of fulfilling this task or realising the rôle of leadership in the development of the working-class movement. The lead, therefore, inevitably passed to non-Marxism, to liberal-socialist opportunism, to Fabianism, that is, to the most commonplace imitation of existing bourgeois thought, without horizon, without perspective, without any deeper understanding of any kind, which saw in the British Constitution and His Majesty's Civil Service the grand total of all social-political theory. This was the other element in the formation of the Independent Labour Party, the poison of opportunism, the so-called " freedom from theory," meaning in fact " freedom " from Marxism and complete servility to bourgeois theory. The poison killed the fruit; the trade unions, so far from being drawn from their servility to capitalism into the revolutionary fight against it, were only drawn from one form of servility to capitalism, *i.e.*, Liberalism, into what became another form of servility to capitalism, *i.e.*, Labourism. The servility was never broken; for only the sword of Marxism can cut that servility.

THE I.L.P. from the outset cut itself loose from Marxism, that is, from the common basis, from the theory and practice, of international socialism. Says George Benson in the official I.L.P.-issued " History of English Socialism " :

> The I.L.P. has never accepted the economic (*sic*) system of Marx. It would be incorrect to say that it has rejected Marxism. It has rather ignored it. Marx's Kapital is quite unreadable to any save the serious and determined student, and as the literature and periodicals of the party have been mainly written by such non-Marxian socialists as MacDonald, Snowden, Glasier and Hardie, Marx's system is practically unknown in the English socialist movement. The economic teaching of the I.L.P. is largely that of the

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> Fabian Society, and the " class-consciousness " of Labour is deeply modified by what MacDonald has called " community-consciousness." (George Benson : " A History of English Socialism," p. 121, published by the " New Leader Ltd." 1925).

Or, as the official spokesman and main author of the whole line of I.L.P. theory from the outset, MacDonald, has declared in his " Story of the I.L.P." :

> The I.L.P. has never belonged to any hard dogmatic school like Marxism, with hard explanations, *e.g.*, class-war, economic determinism, &c.
>
> (J. R. MacDonald : " The Story of the I.L.P. and What It Stands For."—I.L.P. Information Committee, 1924).

In place of this, it has always maintained its famous " freedom " and " tolerance." As the same writer has continued in the same publication :

> The I.L.P. has always had a tolerance even when that meant contradictory doctrines within itself and a confused appeal and propaganda.

Such " confusion "—seldom so openly admitted—is the essential basis for all opportunism and deception of the working class, which invariably defends itself by speaking of its freedom from the " rigidity " of Marxist socialism (is it the voice of MacDonald speaking of Marxism, or of Brockway speaking of Communism ? It is difficult to distinguish the two).

TO-DAY the outcome is visible in all its ugly working out, to the last inch of shame and demoralisation of the movement and servitude to capitalism. The Labour Party, which was to have been the instrument of working-class emancipation, becomes to-day the main instrument for the enslavement of the working class. This is no tragic accident, no trick of fate, but the inevitable, foresee-able, predictable outcome of the original opportunist basis, not merely of the Labour Party—the original character of the Labour Party was so loose and undeveloped, that a strong Marxist leadership guiding it from the start might yet have transformed it step by step—but above all of the Independent Labour Party, of the non-Marxist opportunist theory of the Independent Labour Party, of MacDonaldism and Snowdenism,

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which was the spiritual father of the Labour Party, its leader, guide and moulder to its present condition. *There, in the I.L.P., is the real guilt for the present situation of the Labour Party.* It was the I.L.P. and the I.L.P. leadership that made the theory of the Labour Party, that moulded and intensified its undemocratic constitution, that taught it the line of Liberal-Labour co-operation and co-operation with capitalism, that dominated the first Labour Government of betrayal of the working class, that expelled the Communists (the whole I.L.P. delegation at the successive Labour Party Conferences voted for the expulsion of the Communists, and for every measure of discipline against the militant workers), that set up the network of discipline to paralyse all working-class expression. And if to-day the I.L.P. is cut by a sword of its own sharpening, that is the suitable final reward of every gangster's gunman after his service is done.

FROM the outset, the voice of criticism was not absent, as to where the line chosen would inevitably lead. The voice of working-class discontent sounded again and again in the I.L.P. ranks, the fire of revolt flared up over episode after episode, and often reached high votes in successive conferences. But the I.L.P. leaders impatiently brushed aside all criticism as the voice of political illiteracy, of the " easie-oosie asses," of ignorant purism which could not understand the mass-tactic of development through the Labour Party.

> A section thought that association with the Labour Party was fatally compromising, but the I.L.P. leaders knew that once things were set going certain results were inevitable. They trusted to time and their own work and influence.
>
> (J. R. MacDonald: " The Story of the I.L.P." 1924).

This sentence deserves to stand as a monument of I.L.P. statesmanship, of that bottomless unfathomable depth of vague complacent ambiguity which characterises every I.L.P. utterance—also to-day. " The I.L.P. leaders knew that once things were set going, certain results were inevitable." True. Most true. " Certain results were inevitable." What results,

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unstated. But to-day we can see them. MacDonald and Snowden as the figureheads of a Conservative Ministry; the principal Chairmen of the I.L.P., from the beginning to 1924, MacDonald, Snowden, Allen, joined up with all the City lords, militarists, imperialists, with all the money-grubbers, usurers and sweaters, to drive down the workers to lower depths than even when the I.L.P. was started. That is the outcome of I.L.P. policy, of I.L.P. "freedom from theory," of I.L.P. leadership, as demonstrated in action by its own principal leaders. These are no casual renegades, offscourings from the fringes of a party. They are the principal leaders, the authors and expounders of the whole I.L.P. philosophy, and their line can be traced as a continuous line from the beginning to the present day. "Certain results were inevitable." (In the light of present facts, would not a little more "rigidity" have been of value, Brother Brockway?)

SINCE the war, the I.L.P. has been faced with increasing crisis, both from within its own ranks, from the development of the Labour Party, and from the development of the world crisis and of the world revolution. On the one hand, the challenge of the workers' revolution, successful in Russia, close to success in Germany and Central Europe, swept through the ranks of the workers in the I.L.P., and was only with difficulty defeated by the I.L.P. leaders, at the cost of a manœuvre of a temporary secession from the Second International. But the I.L.P. leaders, MacDonald, Snowden, Allen, and the rest, fully supported by the then lesser leaders, Maxton, Brockway, &c., succeeded in damming the revolutionary wave and defeating affiliation to the Communist International. The resolution of the 1921 Conference declared:

> That the twenty-one conditions imposed by Moscow cannot be accepted; the Conference rejects the idea that this country must follow Moscow methods, and opposes itself to the policy which is deliberately designed to create such conditions here; and therefore calls upon all workers and socialists to renew their activities as socialist propagandists, to strengthen the Independent Labour Party, to capture the machinery of Government, both local and

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> national, and thus inaugurate a policy which will transform the broken and bankrupt society of capitalism into socialism.
>
> (Report of 1921 Conference of the I.L.P.)

That was eleven years ago. What has the experience of these eleven years taught? After eleven years the Russian workers, under the leadership of the Communist Party and along Communist methods, have achieved such gigantic advance to socialism, that these results have now become the regular mainstay of all I.L.P. propaganda as the demonstration of the triumph of socialism (but always as a propaganda of the unexplained results, of a Utopia, never as a propaganda of the "How?"—the one supremely important question to the British workers). But what of the I.L.P.'s alternative path during these eleven years, through the "capture of the machinery of government, both local and national" to "transform the broken and bankrupt society of capitalism into socialism." The workers have voted, have voted into office two Labour Governments. Not one step of advance has been achieved. On the contrary, the workers are worse off than at the start. And to-day the I.L.P. leadership come forward with exactly the same arguments as in 1921 to reject the methods of the revolutionary working-class struggle, by the deceitful trick of calling these methods, laid down since the Communist Manifesto eighty-five years ago, "Moscow methods," "Russian methods"—the stalest, lying trick of all social opportunism since the war. "No Moscow Methods" said MacDonald and Snowden in 1921—and we have seen the outcome to-day. "No Moscow Methods" say Maxton and Brockway to-day. The identity is sufficiently ominous.

AT the same time, the very growth and advance of the Labour Party have intensified the difficulties of the I.L.P. on an ever greater scale. On the one hand, it had rejected the revolutionary line. On the other, it did not wish to disappear into the Labour Party. How to satisfy the growing discontent of the militant workers, and yet not break with the Labour Party? How to differentiate itself from the Labour Party, and yet keep clear of the revolutionary line?

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Labourism or Communism; what could there be between?—this is the dilemma on the horns of which the I.L.P. has writhed for the past dozen years, with ever greater contortions as the Labour Party has grown in strength and discipline on the one side, and the discontent of the workers on the other. At the first the I.L.P. leadership was inclined to consider there could be no answer to this dilemma. Thus the N.A.C. (National Administrative Council, or Executive of the I.L.P.) reported in December, 1920:

> We think it a mistake to try and justify the continued existence of the I.L.P. by changing its programme so as to make it different from that of the Labour Party. Obviously that is a hopeless task.
>
> ("The N.A.C. to the Branches," December, 1920).

"*A hopeless task.*" *That was the opinion of the I.L.P. in* 1920, *that it was a "hopeless task" to try to differentiate its programme from that of the Labour Party.* Let us note this well (the report is signed among others by Jowett, Wallhead, Neil Maclean—Maxton and Brockway were not yet on the N.A.C.), when the I.L.P. endeavours to claim to have represented always something different from the Labour Party, and to shelve its responsibility. And then let us pass on to see how the I.L.P. spent the next dozen years, these so critical years in working-class history and so urgently needing strong and clear leadership, with desperate attempts to fool the workers into believing that it was accomplishing this "hopeless task," that it was squaring the circle.

FOR it was to this "hopeless task" that the I.L.P. in fact set itself during the next dozen years. At the same time as the report of the N.A.C. above quoted, a "Committee on Policy and Relations with Labour Party" had been sitting, and for the first time outlined the manœuvre which was to become the official policy. Its Report declared:

> The Committee feels that in so far as the programme of the I.L.P. is identical with that of the Labour Party, new adherents to the Socialist movement are more likely to join the Labour Party. . . . On the other hand, if their views are more advanced than the Labour Party's programme, they will join an organisation with a more definitely advanced programme than the I.L.P. has so far put forward. . . .

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> The revision of the Party's programme which has been recommended by the Committee should meet many of these difficulties, and tend to consolidate and develop the Party.
>
> ("Report on Policy and Relations with the Labour Party," December, 1920).

Here we have the whole manœuvre set out, plump and plain. The Labour Party and the I.L.P. are to set up business as Codlin and Short. The I.L.P. is to "revise" its programme, and produce a "more advanced" programme than the Labour Party. By this little device, those whose "views are more advanced than the Labour Party's programme," and who might be in danger of "joining an organisation with a more definitely advanced programme than the I.L.P. has so far put forward" (*i.e.*, the Communist Party), will be secured instead to join the I.L.P. in place of the Labour Party; all tastes will thus be catered for, and the profits will all come in the end to the same old firm. This monument of political cynicism was signed, among others, by J. S. Middleton, Assistant Secretary of the Labour Party, Philip Snowden, Bramley, Cole, Mrs. Hamilton, and other lights of the Labour Party. *Thus there was at the outset no question of a conflict;* it was a business arrangement, a contract for the division of business signed on both sides. If finally the calculations went wrong, it was no fault of the promoters, but because the uncontrollable outside factor, the mounting discontent of the workers, tore through the transparent make-believe, and compelled the unhappy I.L.P. leadership, after long resistance and reluctance, to enter on a new and more desperate stage of manœuvre.

THE typical expression of this stage of the manœuvre, from within the Labour Party, was the "Living Wage" or so-called "Socialism In Our Time" policy. Let it be noted once again that this policy was first adumbrated by the representative of the extreme right, Clifford Allen, in his Chairman's Address of 1924. It was elaborated in an official report of four representatives, all of whom have ranged themselves with the right—Brailsford, Wise, Hobson and Creech Jones. Yet this policy, which was the main substance of

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I.L.P. propaganda during the years 1925-1930, was actually proclaimed and propagated by the sentimentalist rhetoricians, the Maxtons and Brockways (themselves incapable of producing any policy) as the great " left " contribution to socialist thought and tactics. The actual policy, as is by now sufficiently familiar, was a farrago of nonsense : ignoring blandly every serious issue of the real situation, of capitalist policy, of the Labour Party, of the conditions of the working-class struggle or of the conquest of power, it sketched out a muddle-headed mixture of every capitalist and reformist nostrum, credit policy, rationalisation, solution of the crisis through the home market, Fordism, organised capitalism, American prosperity and high wages as the disproof of Marxism and model for socialism, the triumph of the Federal Reserve Board in " ironing out the trade cycle," &c., &c. Many of the passages from this report and the accompanying propaganda could be reprinted now with comic effect as examples of I.L.P. leadership to the workers and a measure of their understanding of the situation.

IT is still important to recall this now moribund, but not quite dead, " Living Wage " (alias " Socialism In Our Time ") policy, because the present I.L.P. endeavours to-day to put as its distinctive claim against Communism that it understands better the British situation. *The policy and propaganda of the I.L.P. during the past decade is damning evidence against this claim, and a powerful evidence of the greater correctness in every point of the analysis of the Communist International.* Indeed the whole " Living Wage " and " Socialism In Our Time " policy was at the time subjected to very close analysis by the Communist Party, an analysis to which no serious answer was attempted at the time, and of which it is now pertinent to remind the I.L.P. leadership in the light of subsequent events. The Communist analysis argued that the whole I.L.P. policy and propaganda, with its easy assumptions of solution of the crisis through legislative measures of cheap credit, capitalist reorganisation, a minimum wage, increased social services, &c., completely failed to

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understand the real character, extent and deeper causes of the crisis of capitalism in Britain, which would inevitably extend and lead to very much heavier attacks against the workers; that the American " miracle " of supposed stable prosperity, universal " high wages," " solution " of poverty and the trade cycle, &c., was nothing but a bourgeois economists' myth, and the temporarily ascending conditions of capitalism there would give place to extremely heavy crisis also in America in the near future; that rationalisation would rapidly lead to intensified world crisis; and that the prospect before the workers was not one of peaceful advance to socialism through rising prosperity, higher wages, and increased social services, but of ever intensified struggle against worsened conditions and extending capitalist attacks, raising ever more sharply the issue of class power. The I.L.P. in reply rejected these criticisms as based on the " obsolete " doctrines of Marx, who knew only nineteenth century capitalism, and whose theories were now finally disproved by the triumphs of modern organised capitalism in America.

TO-DAY every worker can judge who was right, the Communist Party or the Independent Labour Party, in this whole test issue. Indeed, the question can be widened to the whole general question of which has given the more correct analysis of the situation and more correct leadership to the workers during the past decade, not only in these questions, but in all questions, including the transformation and development of the Labour Party, the necessity of the independent fight against the Labour Party, the world situation and war, the transformation of the trade unions and new conditions of economic struggles, &c. It would certainly be of interest if the I.L.P. leadership could to-day be compelled to state where they stand now in relation to the Communist criticisms of their policy and analysis of the situation five years ago, which they then rejected. These same criticisms and lines of argument they are to-day, five years late, *after the event*, after the harm is done by their wrong leadership,

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beginning to repeat in a very confused form in all their propaganda. But to demand such honesty and self-criticism of them would be in fact to demand too much. Self-criticism belongs only to responsible leadership. *The absence of any serious attempt at self-criticism in relation to their own past and professed present "change of front" is the most damning fact about the whole present I.L.P. position and leadership.* From this fact alone it is possible to say that no serious self-correction and rearming has taken place, but only a cheapjack's hasty change of goods in the shop-window. The workers in the I.L.P. who wish to make a real change must carry through such a real drastic review of the whole line and reconsideration of every issue for themselves. If they once do that, and refuse to swallow a few easy phrases at face value, there will be no doubt of the result.

INDEED, the I.L.P. leadership have already begun to show their hand by endeavouring to cover the glaring contradiction that their present change of front, in relation to their uncorrected past, lays bare, with the declaration (Chairman's Address to the Annual Conference, 1932) that the Living Wage policy, which "was appropriate five years ago" now "becomes inadequate." By this halting declaration they only expose the true character of their present position. Since when has this policy of reformism "become inadequate"? If it is "inadequate" now, why was it "appropriate" five years ago? Have the basic conditions of capitalism and the working-class conquest of power so completely changed between 1927 and 1932? *Was Reformism correct in* 1927, *and has it only "become" incorrect in* 1932? When we are told with such a flourish of trumpets to-day "First, Workers' Power—then a Socialist Plan" as now the only correct order, was this not equally necessary in 1927? In effect, their declaration amounts to saying, in the very same breath that they declare themselves "revolutionaries," that of course five years ago, before this terrible world crisis came and destroyed all our hopes and plans, a policy of reforms, of "a series of measures over a period of years" within capitalism, was

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perfectly correct. *And they do not see that when they say this, they are simply proving that they are still fully reformists in their outlook, and directly denying all their "revolutionary" professions.*

IT is in fact only the pressure of the present world-crisis, and not any basic change from reformism, that has compelled the present temporary apparent change of front of the I.L.P. *It is a species of "crisis-socialism" or "crisis-revolutionism," as if the necessity of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism depends, not on the permanent conditions of capitalism and the working-class struggle, but only on the special temporary conditions of the present world-crisis.* It is obvious that this type of "revolutionism," as a political basis for a workers' party, is nothing but another form of opportunist floating on the surface of events, without plan or compass, and will rapidly ebb, if capitalism shows a slight upward turn. The complete confusion, and failure to understand either the present crisis or the revolutionary line, is shown in the fantastic loose talk now indulged in by the I.L.P. about the present crisis as the "final collapse of capitalism" ("There is no end but complete catastrophe"—Maxton in the *New Leader*, September 4, 1931; "We confess we see no prospect of escape" —Paton in the *New Leader*, July 24, 1931), as if such collapse were some automatic question, and not solely dependent on whether the revolutionary workers are able to overthrow it. From this it follows that, if capitalism should show some upward turn, all their theories fall to the ground. In that case we may expect that, after a period of some confusion (which they will try to hide by ridiculing the Communists as having been under the illusion that capitalism was about to collapse and a revolution was imminent), they will re-emerge as ordinary reformists until the next crash.

THIS temporary, superficial "bowing-to-the-storm" character of the I.L.P.'s present "revolutionism" can be expressed still more sharply. It is not even a simple question of pressure of the world-crisis as the cause in the

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sense that the world-crisis has suddenly awakened a set of sleepers and caused them to see the error of their ways. This might at least provide a genuine conversion, even though late, and very damning to any claim to leadership. But the actual process has been far more profoundly and degradingly opportunist. Not the pressure of the world-crisis as an explosive exposure of the bankruptcy of all their conceptions, but solely *the pressure of the growing working-class discontent* and militancy in the ranks of their own membership consequent on the world-crisis, has driven the I.L.P. leadership, after prolonged resistance, to a temporary *apparent* change of front—without self-criticism, without self-correction, without any facing of basic issues. That every step to the " left " during these last years—the imposition of discipline on the parliamentary group, the move for disaffiliation, the change of programme—has begun as a pressure from below, has been extorted against reluctant opposition from above, has only been finally taken up above in order to maintain their leadership, in order not to lose hold on the dwindling membership—this can be easily proved by a survey of the facts.

WITH naïve candour the General Secretary, Paton, stated the position at the Annual Conference in 1932 :

> The reality of the present position was that for years now they had been suffering a constant attrition of members and branches which nothing they had been able to do had the power to check. . . .
>
> When he had come to Head Office in 1924, he had found the N.A.C. with a constant preoccupation—the need for evolving a fighting policy distinct from that of the Labour Party, if the I.L.P. was to survive. (1932 Annual Conference Report, p. 43).

Thus the question was never a question of the correctness of a " right " or " left " policy, of endeavouring to find the correct necessary lead for the working class, popular or unpopular, and fighting for it ; the question was solely how to find a left-seeming policy *in order to check the dwindling membership*. The " constant preoccupation " of Head Office since 1924, we learn, was how to " evolve a fighting policy distinct from that

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of the Labour Party," not because such a fighting policy was necessary from the facts of the situation and the working-class struggle, but in order to maintain a hold on the membership, " if the I.L.P. was to survive." Similarly the right wing leader, Dollan, writes of the falling membership :

> The membership of the I.L.P. is at its lowest since the war. The membership has declined at least by several thousand in the last five years. The " old gang " were blamed for the fall in membership, before Maxton became leader. He has been the leader for six years, during which the membership has continued to fall. The exact facts of membership and finance are known by me, but I refrain from making them public because publication would harm the party. (*New Leader*, July 22, 1932.)

The essential available facts of the membership are not so difficult to reach. According to the Report of the Policy Committee in 1920, the membership, based on affiliation fees paid at Head Office, stood in 1909 at 28,000 ; in 1914, after the effects of Liberal-Labour co-operation, it had fallen to 20,000 ; in 1919, with the post-war wave, it rose to 32,000 and in 1920 to 37,000. To-day, as we have seen (Paton's statement in *Forward*, August 13, 1932, revealing the 389 votes at Bradford as equivalent to 3.3 per cent. of the paid-up membership), it has fallen to under 12,000.

THE history of the past few years shows a continuous pressure of discontent from below, and reluctant yielding from above. The speeches of Maxton and the leadership during these years are a constant plea against their own supporters (" You placed me against the guns," &c.), a plea for " tolerance " and " latitude " in carrying out decisions, for " discretion," &c. It was the 1929 Conference that on a local resolution (moved by Southall, of Birmingham) gave a definite instruction for all I.L.P. Members of Parliament to vote against war-credits ; the N.A.C., through the mouth of Maxton, pleaded for " tolerance " and " discretion " in carrying out this " difficult " decision—and proceeded not to carry it out. It was the 1930 Conference that thereupon, again on a local resolution, demanded the reconstruction of the parliamentary group on a disciplined basis ; the N.A.C. proceeded

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to its task with the most apologetic explanations (the Secretary Paton's correspondence with Shinwell) that it had no stomach for any form of " heresy-hunting," and that only the Conference's resolution compelled it to do anything. Finally the demand for disaffiliation arose originally from below, and showed itself as a rising force in the Divisional Conferences in the beginning of 1931. At this time, after twenty months of the Labour Government, when the disaffiliation issue was directly raised, keenly debated and voted on at the Scottish Divisional Conference, Maxton at this conference declared his " complete neutrality " on this issue. Truly, a wonderful picture of " leaders from behind " !

IT was only as through the events of 1931 the tide of disaffiliation began visibly to rise on all sides, that the N.A.C. began to hesitate. But still they clung to the last by all possible means to the Labour Party. Even after the overwhelming exposure of the August crisis and the fall of the Labour Government, they still gave their election lead for a Third Labour Government, found the Labour Election Programme " the rallying ground for the whole of the working class," and declared that this Labour Election Programme " reads almost like the published statements of the I.L.P." (*New Leader*, October 2, 1931). On the other hand, the mass of the membership were in rising revolt against further connection with the Labour Party. The Special Conference on disaffiliation was due to be held at Leeds in November. At the last moment the N.A.C. postponed it, because, as we learn from Kirkwood, a member of the N.A.C., they feared a majority for disaffiliation :

> We have never taken a definite vote on this issue, but there is no denying the fact that the N.A.C. decided to call a Special Conference at Leeds on the subject of disaffiliation, and decided later, having taken cognisance of everything it could get, that *it would be better not to hold the Conference, because if it were held, the rank and file would have demanded disaffiliation.* The N.A.C. thought this would be unwise.
>
> (Kirkwood in *Forward*, January 30, 1932.)

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At the Easter Conference this year the official policy still played for time, and succeeded to split the disaffiliationist majority by the transparent manœuvre of " conditional affiliation." Only when it finally became clear that further resistance was impossible, and would have meant the danger of a real revolt and displacement of the leadership, only then took place the sudden conversion of the main body of the N.A.C. to disaffiliation (signalised already before by the very sudden conversion and complete change-over of the Secretary, Paton). The N.A.C. then took the direct leadership in disaffiliation and the new " revolutionary " policy, in order to maintain the leadership in its hands, and strangle and paralyse the real character of the movement as a movement of working-class revolt from reaching to any serious conclusion. *The process is exactly similar to that of a trade union bureaucracy, which, after resisting a strike to the last, suddenly takes on its leadership in order to strangle it from within.* And that is why the left workers in the I.L.P., if they are not to be defeated, must carry the fight a stage further to its conclusion, to real revolutionary working-class politics, to Communism.

THIS insincere, manœuvring character is most clearly shown in the nature and conditions of the break with the Labour Party. On the one hand, the I.L.P. leadership loudly proclaim that the real issue is their fight against the " betrayal " of the working class by the Labour Party :

> The present difficulties arose from the opposition of the I.L.P. to the compromising policy of the Labour Government and its betrayal of working-class interests and the socialist cause.
>
> (I.L.P. Statement signed by Maxton and Brockway, *New Leader*, July 1, 1932.)

But in the very same issue, on the very same page, we learn from the General Secretary, that " peace " with this party of " betrayal " would have been perfectly possible, if only certain " technicalities " could have been surmounted :

> Had the will to peace existed in the Executive of the Labour Party, the technicalities could have been surmounted.
>
> (I.L.P. Secretary, Paton, in the *New Leader*, July 1, 1932.)

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Thus the Labour Party has "betrayed" the workers. Nevertheless, "peace" with it would be perfectly possible, if only the Labour Party itself would have shown a "will to peace" (the I.L.P. in a most Christian forgiving spirit was fully willing to make "peace" with the "traitors"); only "*technicalities*" stood in the way, because there was no "will to peace" of the Labour Party. What a magnificent militant leadership to the workers for opening the battle against Labour Party "betrayal"! But indeed the most damning fact about the whole "fundamental conflict" is the I.L.P.'s own proposals, as submitted to the Labour Party, for settling the "technicalities." The I.L.P. proposed that its Members of Parliament should be *bound by Labour Party Conference decisions!* As every one knows, this means the full policy of the social fascist bureaucracy, approval of the Labour Government and of every betrayal, and approval of the Standing Orders into the bargain. And lest the I.L.P. should argue that they were only ready to accept all this in the hope of "changing the policy from within," it is opportune to remind them of the fully correct statement of their Chairman in his Address to the Bradford Conference last month that "the Labour Party is not a party of individual members who have democratic power to change its leadership and policy." Thus the character of the break completely damns the claim of the I.L.P. leadership to be in any fundamental conflict with the Labour Party programme and policy.

LET us now turn to the "new revolutionary programme." It is clear from the survey of all the events which have led up to it, that the workers will have to scrutinise this production with some considerable sharpness, rather than accept it at the face value as an expression of their aims. If they have been deceived before, if the I.L.P. lead has been proved wrong every time so far, with regard to the achievement of Socialism through the Labour Party, with regard to the rejection of Marxism, with regard to the Living Wage, &c., &c., what reason is there to suppose that this "brand-new article" from the same firm is going to be any better—more

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especially, when it is not accompanied with any serious examination or review of the previous policies and errors? A programme is not a collection of phrases for a peroration. A programme needs to mark out with absolute clearness the line of the working-class struggle, and to answer with absolute clearness all the basic questions and problems of the working-class revolution—the relation to the State, the relation to bourgeois democracy, the forms and methods of struggle, the character of the revolution, the conditions of the conquest of power, the form of the workers' power, &c. Vagueness and ambiguity on these questions is the surest sign of opportunism, of practical subordination to existing capitalism, under cover of a few revolutionary phrases, without any intention of serious struggle. Does the I.L.P. programme answer these questions with a clear line?

THE new I.L.P. programme, it is announced, marks a "definite break" with all previous I.L.P. policy. It is astonishing with what ease a complete leadership turns round on itself and is able to repudiate its whole past. What is the distinctive character that makes this break? The distinctive character, we are told, is that the new programme of the I.L.P. is "definitely Marxist."

> The new constitution in both thought and expression marks a definite break with the traditional outlook of the I.L.P. Its basis is definitely Marxist.
>
> (I.L.P. General Secretary, Paton, in the *New Leader*, July 15, 1932.)

And again:

> The new constitution of the I.L.P. . . . frankly accepts the Marxian philosophy of the class struggle.
>
> (Editorial statement, *New Leader*, July 22, 1932.)

Thus we have on the best official authority that the new programme of the I.L.P. is now "definitely Marxist." It is as well that they have told us in commenting on the programme, because no one in reading the programme might have guessed it. Compare the amazing statement of the "Object":

> The political objective of the I.L.P. will be a State in which work of social value will be the basis of livelihood, and all who do such work shall have equal rights of citizenship.

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Shades of the " Critique of the Gotha Programme " ! After all Marx's painful teaching on the question of the State, the objective of socialism is stated to be " a State." And what a jumbling together of the socialist objective and undigested fragments of the transitional period, the whole tied up in one parcel as " the political objective." However, we have no time to spend on details, and need to concentrate solely on the central question of the conception of the line of the revolutionary struggle. Let us therefore content ourselves with noting that the I.L.P. now consider their programme and basis " definitely Marxist "—a very useful starting point for discussion.

NOW Marxism is a very definite thing. It is not a matter of repeating one or two phrases, or picking up a fancy name for purposes of decoration. It is not a kind of new hat which a millionaire can buy to add to his wardrobe, alongside his other headgear. Marxism is complete, systematic and all-inclusive theory and practice, affecting the whole outlook, approach and line in relation to every question and the whole practical activity. A party which has consistently followed opportunism cannot " become Marxist " overnight by the adoption of a few sentences in its programme—*without changing* its whole existing line, literature, propaganda, activity and also, in practice, its leadership. But it is only necessary to pick up any page of the I.L.P. organ at the present day, or to look at any pamphlet, to see how fantastic and ridiculous is the claim that the I.L.P. is now " Marxist," how completely the same old slovenly, confused approach, under full bourgeois influence, to every question still goes on. However, we are only concerned now to deal with the central line of the programme. Marxism has a very definite and exact teaching on the questions of the State, of bourgeois democracy, of the working-class struggle, of the conquest of power, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the rôle of force, of civil war, &c. Is this teaching the teaching of the I.L.P. ? *The line of Marxism is in fact the line of Communism*—of the Communist Manifesto, of all the theory and practice of Marx and Engels, of the early social democratic parties before the

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opportunist, revisionist corruption, of Lenin, of the October Revolution, of the Communist International? *Is this line the line of the I.L.P.?* If not, why not?

TAKE first the central question of the State and capitalist democracy. Marx taught that the State in capitalist society is and can only be the organ of the capitalist dictatorship; that this is true "in a democratic republic no less than in a monarchy" (Engels, 1891 Preface to Marx's "Civil War in France"); that universal suffrage can only be a barometer of the degree of development of the working class, but cannot be in any sense the means to the conquest of State power:

> Universal suffrage is an index of the maturity of the working class; it cannot, and will not, give anything more in the present State.
>
> (Engels: "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.")

that the proletariat cannot take over the existing State machine for its own purposes:

> The working class cannot simply seize the available ready machinery of the State and set it going for its own ends.
>
> (Marx and Engels: 1872 Preface to the "Communist Manifesto.")

but that the working class must "smash" the existing State machine (Marx: Letter to Kugelmann, 1871) and set up in its place its own dictatorship, the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

> Between capitalist and communist society there lies a period of revolutionary transformation from the former to the latter. A stage of political transition corresponds to this period, and the State during this period can be no other than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. (Marx: Letter to Bracke, 1875.)

All this is the most elementary ABC of Marxism, familiar to every tyro.

AND now turn to the I.L.P. new "revolutionary" "Marxist" programme:

> The Independent Labour Party believes that electoral activity for the capture of all the organs of government, national and local, is essential, recognising that such control would be of the greatest importance in the change from capitalism to socialism.

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Is it not obvious that we have fallen at once here from any pretence of Marxism to the most commonplace Labour parliamentarism, to the full plane of capitalist-democratic politics. Gone is the conception of universal suffrage as only a barometer of working-class development; gone is the conception of revolutionary parliamentarism, of the use of elections and parliament only as a platform for revolutionary agitation and propaganda. Electoral and parliamentary activity is to be carried on "*for the capture of all the organs of government.*" Here we have the typical, basic Labour conception of winning a parliamentary majority to take over the capitalist state machine; which means in practice, if there is to be any question of a parliamentary majority, developing the I.L.P. as a full parliamentary capitalist-democratic governmental party. The ineffable Maxton promises at Bradford "to try to get a parliamentary majority for the I.L.P. in the next five years." And when some left delegates tried to "substitute a clause which would place more emphasis on creating a revolutionary movement where Parliament would be used for propaganda purposes only," Beckett, on behalf of the platform, secured its rejection with the following revealing statement:

> He pointed out the difficulty of trying to fight parliamentary elections if the public at the same time had to be told that parliament was of no use. *If the I.L.P. did not believe in municipal and national government, it would have to work underground to bring about a real revolution. He urged that the I.L.P. should work through local and national machinery for government, and man it with people it could trust.* (*New Leader*, August 5, 1932.)

This spokesman of the official policy has let the cat out of the bag. The official policy is revealed as unadulterated *parliamentary ministerialism*, which is correctly shown to involve *rejection of revolution.*

WHAT, then, of "revolution" and "revolutionary working-class struggle" and the "revolutionary conquest of power," of which the I.L.P. to-day speaks so much. The Marxist teaching on Revolution is so clear that none can miss it.

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> The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution.
>
> (Marx and Engels: "The Communist Manifesto.")

"The *forcible* overthrow of all existing social conditions." Note well, Brother Brockway of the "pacifist technique" of revolution.

> In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.
>
> (Marx and Engels: "The Communist Manifesto.")

"*The violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie.*" Note well, Mr. "Marxist" Murry. Nothing about only "a revolution in the minds and hearts of the people" here. Nothing about "Keep the Revolution in the right place—in your hearts and minds." Better to think twice before you wish to go on calling yourself a "Marxist." Far, far better to stick to Christ and Lawrence and the profitable exhibition of the recesses of your soul.

> These gentlemen, have they ever seen a Revolution? Revolution is undoubtedly the most authoritative thing possible. Revolution is an act in which one part of the population forces its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets, cannon, *i.e.*, by most authoritative means. And the conquering party is inevitably forced to maintain its supremacy by means of that fear which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Had the Paris Commune not relied on the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie, would it have lasted longer than a single day?
>
> (Engels: Letter against the Anarchists, 1873.)

"*Revolution is an act by which one part of the population forces its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets, cannon.*" "*Arms.*" "*The armed people against the bourgeoisie.*" Run away, Mr. Brockway, and give up calling yourself a "Marxist" or attacking the "Russian" (!) conception "that the change from capitalism to socialism must come by the method of armed civil war." (Debate with Pollitt). Marxism was not made to be the plaything of fools; and the workers in Britain

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also are beginning to learn the character of the capitalist dictatorship, built on force and only conquerable by force.

AND now turn to the I.L.P. Programme, this " revolutionary " " Marxist " programme. What has it to say on " Revolution," of which its orators spout so much ? Nothing, friends, nothing at all. Not even the word, cheap as they have tried to make that word of power, which is not for their lips. Here is nothing about the " dictatorship of the proletariat " or " soviets " or such like matters outside the staid, respectable parliamentary-trade union circumference. Instead we find the following cautious little adventure into the unknown :

> It realises that the interests behind Capitalism are likely to offer resistance, by any and every means, to any attempt to dispossess them of the economic and political power on which their privileges depend, and, particularly in the circumstances of a complete economic breakdown, to resort to some form of dictatorship in opposition to economic and social changes. The minds of the workers must be prepared for such a situation, and they must be made ready to meet it and overcome it by the use of their mass strength for the capture of power.

Splendid vagueness ! The capitalists *may*, nay, are " likely " to " resort to some form of dictatorship." So there is no capitalist dictatorship at present ? And *then* (*i.e.*, *after* Hitler-Mussolini are in power, have entrenched themselves), the workers will show them (did not the Italian workers ? whose Socialist leaders also promised much, but opposed decisive action *before* Mussolini came to power) Then, then all gaily for " mass strength for the capture of power." But this will only be after a hypothetical (very hypothetical) I.L.P. Government has begun to try to " dispossess " the capitalists. Till then, sleep quiet in your beds, dear capitalists. Or in the event of a " complete economic breakdown " and a fully fledged capitalist dictatorship established and well entrenched. Then, with plenty of odds against, full steam ahead for " mass strength for the capture of power." Fine : and what does that mean ? Mum's the word, says the Programme. The paragraph stops there, and the Programme takes a big breath

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and goes on with the " immediate urgency " of a " fundamental transformation of the economic system " and a " Socialist Plan for this decisive change " ; " the capture of power by the working class must be used for the immediate application of this comprehensive plan." But how did they capture power ? We don't know, but we know how they didn't. " Not armed conflict," says Brockway (Chairman's Address to the 1932 Annual Conference) ; " by political or industrial means," *i.e.*, parliamentarism or trade unionism and the passive strike, which never yet won power anywhere and never will.

BUT this is nothing but the old Labour Programme and the old I.L.P. Programme over again ? Precisely. It is our old friend " *Parliamentary Democracy, plus If.*" If the capitalists, &c., then we shall show them. Until then, " work through Parliament was probably the best method " (Skinner, on behalf of the N.A.C. at the Bradford Conference). What says the old I.L.P. Constitution of 1922 ?

> The Independent Labour Party recognises that circumstances may arise when a Government or reactionary class might attempt to suppress liberty or thwart the national will, and it holds that to defeat such attempt Democracy must use to the utmost extent its political and industrial power.
>
> (I.L.P. Constitution, adopted Annual Conference, 1922.)

Is there any respect in which the " new " " revolutionary " Programme of 1932 goes beyond this ? " Circumstances may arise." " Political and industrial power." *It is the same old nonsense, the same dreary emptiness that the I.L.P. has mumbled all these years.* Not only that, but the great prototype and spiritual father of them all, MacDonald, himself went further, even as late as 1924 :

> It has always been recognised that political democracy might be prevented until by revolution it seized political power, that social democracy might be challenged by capitalism and the ruling classes, and that conflicts, that were not political, but might be by arms, might ensue.
>
> (J. R. MacDonald : " The Story of the I.L.P. and What It Stands For," 1924.)

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" Might be by arms." How the old father of them all outstrips the puny infants who try to tread in his footsteps. This sentence, which bears the true noble stamp of a MacDonald sentence in its ponderous labyrinthine meaninglessness (the deeper you delve into a MacDonald sentence, the less it means), should teach a lesson to the stammering, stumbling Maxton-Brockway urchins of how they can touch on even the thorny question of " arms " (with plenty of " might . . . might ") without danger.

THUS the circle is completed, and we are back at the full old normal Labour basis as the sum-total and final outcome of the grand " new " " revolutionary " " Marxist " programme of the I.L.P. adopted at Bradford. And as the crowning indignity, the old right wingers of the I.L.P., the official Labourists, and even the bourgeoisie, who should all be gnashing their teeth or at any rate shaking their heads with horror at the reckless daring of these rebels, smile an indulgent smile and remark that the " new " programme is very like the old Labour programme, redecorated with a few fancy phrases.

> The new I.L.P. Manifesto was full of revolutionary phrases, but there was no difference in policy between it and the new policies of the Labour Party.
>
> (E. F. Wise at the Bradford Conference, *New Leader*, August 5, 1932.)

> Mr. Maxton and Mr. Brockway, two able and sincere men, whose loss to the Labour Party we regret, believe that they can best further the cause of socialism by building up a new party and a new constitution, much resembling the old, save for the embellishment of a few revolutionary phrases which no one has clearly defined.
>
> (*Daily Herald* Editorial, August 1, 1932.)

> The Conference has not, however, defined revolutionary socialism. Like the Executive Committee, the Conference has been content with evasion of that rather dangerous duty. . . . Deliberate ambiguity only cloaks with timidity the intention.
>
> (*Times* Editorial, August 1, 1932.)

In view of this situation, it is not surprising that several prominent representatives of the present I.L.P. leadership have

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already been making open hints of possible future reunion with the Labour Party. Thus Campbell Stephen spoke in the following terms at the Bradford Conference :

> If the local I.L.P. branches were loyal to the disaffiliation decision and cut adrift, the Labour Party would be compelled to realise that it could not carry on in the autocratic way of the past, and that it must consider new policies.

And the ex-Chairman Wallhead, " who was greeted with a display of real affection," stresses the *New Leader* report :

> Begged the delegates not to widen the breach with the Labour Movement more than possible, as eventually, after doing their utmost to mould the workers' minds, they would have to come to some form of unity. (*New Leader*, August 5, 1932.)

WE would therefore say very seriously to all left I.L.P. members who have fought for disaffiliation from the Labour Party and for a revolutionary policy :—*The seeming " victory " against Labourism and for revolution at Bradford is not yet a victory.* King Stork is only replaced by King Log. This is not a mere question of leadership, it is a question of the whole line and policy. The policy is still a policy of reformism, of capitalist democracy, of pacifism, of avoidance of the struggle, even though the phrases used are more cunning. The talk of " Marxism," the talk of " Revolution," is demonstrable deceit. The real fight for revolutionary policy has still to be fought. This fight can end in one goal only—the goal of Communism. The line of Revolutionary Marxism is the line of Communism—of the Communist Manifesto, of all the theory and practice of Marx and Engels, of the early social democratic parties before the opportunist, revisionist corruption, of Lenin, of the October Revolution, of the Communist International. Lay aside all smaller considerations, all difficulties with or disapprovals of the existing Communist Party in Britain, which is only a nucleus, a beginning, and which will grow strong, as more workers make it strong. Judge only the big basic issues of Communism, and above all the necessity, the vital, urgent necessity of building a powerful united revolutionary working-class party

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in Britain, a true mass party of Communism, of the Communist International. This is the indispensably necessary path forward, the sole path forward, for all left I.L.P.-ers. The alternative is to become only pawns and covers of the left reformism which at present holds the leadership of the I.L.P. and seeks to take to itself the fruits of the Bradford "victory." Only determined fight of all sincere left workers in the I.L.P., which must and will lead to unity with the Communist Party, can defeat these manœuvres, can drive the way forward to big increase in revolutionary working-class strength and unity in Britain.

R. P. D.

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THE I.L.P.—HAS IT REALLY CHANGED?

By J. R. CAMPBELL

> In this situation there are two great imperatives. First they must break with the Labour Party; then they must unite on a policy of revolutionary socialism. The first is a preliminary to the second. The break: then unity.

IN these words Mr. Fenner Brockway, the Chairman of the Independent Labour Party, in his speech at Bradford, described what he conceived to be the task before this Conference.

The Conference followed his lead, and carried a motion for disaffiliation from the Labour Party by 241 votes to 142.

What does this decision signify? Does it mean a real break with reformism and the adoption of a revolutionary policy? Can there be a revolutionary policy distinct from that of the Communist Party?

What are the reasons put forward by the Independent Labour Party for breaking with the Labour Party?

Mr. Brockway told the Bradford Conference:

> When the second Labour Government proved no better than the first, but actually worse, when once again the Labour Party in office adopted a non-socialist and even anti-socialist policy, the I.L.P. in the assertion of its socialist convictions inevitably came in conflict with the Standing Orders (of the Parliamentary Labour Party, J.R.C.)
>
> We rebelled against the Standing Orders because they required the I.L.P. to refrain from voting against legislation which was opposed to the interests of the working class and was a betrayal of Socialism.

There is no ambiguity about this statement. The Labour Government according to this statement was carrying through an anti-socialist policy. The I.L.P. was valiantly fighting for a socialist policy. The conflict over policy stressed itself in a conflict around the Standing Orders of the Labour Party, so Mr. Brockway alleges.

The Character of the I.L.P. Opposition to the Labour Government

There can be no question about the fact that the Labour Government pursued an anti-socialist policy. There is no evidence, however, that the I.L.P. ever attempted to mobilise the working class around a genuine socialist policy in opposition to the Labour Government.

An examination of the measures advocated by the I.L.P. in opposition to the National Government will show that they fell under three heads.

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In the first place advocacy of alternative capitalist policies to those being pursued by the Labour Party. Secondly the advocacy in a spirit of purest demagogy, of utopian measures to be adopted by the Labour Government within the limits of the capitalist system, and thirdly, sham opposition to the attacks of the Labour Government on the workers, while refusing to organise resistance to those attacks in the only way such resistance could be organised—namely by mass struggle of the working class outside Parliament.

A good example of the latter method is afforded by the " opposition " of the I.L.P. group in Parliament to the various measures of the Labour Government attacking the unemployed.

Now and then the I.L.P. group in the knowledge that the Liberals and Tories were voting with the Labour Party would stage some sham opposition to the Government on its treatment of the unemployed. At no time, however, did the I.L.P. attempt to organise the unemployed to struggle against the policy of the Labour Government. The I.L.P. group made dramatic gestures in Parliament, but outside its members helped to return Labour candidates at bye-elections, to co-operate in Labour groups in city councils, carrying forward capitalist policy.

Occasionally the opposition took the form of recommending an alternative capitalist policy to that pursued by the Labour Government. When in the Cotton industry, for example, the Labour Government was encouraging the policy of " voluntary " rationalisation (with, of course, pressure from the banks) the Independent Labour Party recommends the " reorganisation " of the Cotton industry as a public service, *i.e.*, the stimulation and control of the rationalisation process by the capitalist state.

A typical example of the putting forward of utopian suggestions for improving the condition of the working class under capitalism is provided in the Living Wage Bill which Maxton introduced in 1930 in the midst of a heavy attack on working class wages.

This Bill provided for : the setting up of a Living Wage Commission to determine what a living wage was ; the setting up of a Reorganisation Commission to force the capitalist rationalisation of any industry that could not pay the living wage fixed by the first named Commission.

In other words rationalisation is the way to higher wages.

Thus at a critical period of struggle working-class attention is switched away from the necessity and possibility of building a united front in the industries and trade union branches against the capitalist attacks and diverted to the possibility of converting the Labour Government from a government attacking the workers into a government guaranteeing a living wage.

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Many other current capitalist ideas were advocated by the I.L.P. during the lifetime of the Labour Government.

It was a strenuous advocate of managed currency and inflation, of camouflaged tariffs in the form of Import Boards, of State capitalist rationalisation through the medium of public corporations.

The claim of the I.L.P. was not that the reformist policy of the Labour Party was wrong, but that the I.L.P. was the guardian of the policy of the Labour Party which had been thrown over by the Labour Government.

" In actual fact," wrote Mr. Paton, Secretary of the I.L.P., to Mr. Arthur Henderson, " there is only one issue upon which the I.L.P. Conference has instructed its members to vote contrary to the declared policy of the Labour Party, and that is the issue of armaments, upon which differences of opinion and votes have always been expressed in the Parliamentary Labour Party without challenge.

" If there have been a number of occasions on other issues when the members of the I.L.P. Parliamentary Group have voted independently of the official whip, this has been because they have felt that the principles of the Labour Party and their election pledges, given within the terms of the authorised programme, have left them no option." (N.A.C.'s report to Blackpool I.L.P. Conference).

After the experience of the Labour Government which according to Mr. Brockway adopted " a non-socialist and even anti-socialist policy," the Independent Labour Party at the General Election last year called for support for Labour candidates and for a third Labour Government.

If such was the real character of the opposition, why did the Labour Party insist so fiercely about the I.L.P. conforming to the Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Party and not voting against the Government?

Mainly we think because the Labour Party, being a governing party, wanted to make it clear to the capitalist class that it was a coherent, disciplined party, capable of being trusted with the carrying out of capitalist policy. To the extent to which the advocacy of alternative capitalist policy and the indulgence from time to time of sham left demagogy on the part of the I.L.P. tended to create an unfavourable impression of the unity of the Labour Party, that Party had to attempt to force the I.L.P. into conformity.

Gramophone Records To Suit All Tastes

Why then did the I.L.P. break with the Labour Party? Undoubtedly there was a growing opposition in the I.L.P. membership to affiliation to the Labour Party. But this opposition was by no means strong enough to force the leaders to adopt the policy of disaffiliation. So far from the movement from below pushing the leaders reluctantly

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into a policy of disaffiliation the dominant group of the leaders led the movement for disaffiliation. Not only the moods of their own members, but the general left-ward swing of the masses induced those leaders to believe that if they could get the masses to believe that the I.L.P. was fundamentally different from the Labour Party, with which many workers were dissatisfied, then the left workers could be won for the I.L.P.

The I.L.P. leaders were, of course, prepared to remain inside the Labour Party provided that they could get a compromise on Standing Orders to enable them to claim that the I.L.P. had really won a socialist victory over the Labour Party. When that possibility was denied them they broke.

But in the negotiations with the Labour Party before the final break, Mr. Brockway gave the following estimation of the Labour Party :

> I think it may be useful to say that the I.L.P. accepts the objective of the Labour Party—Socialism—and, in general, its programme. There are isolated issues upon which we differ in that programme. But on major issues we accept it.
>
> The difference between the two organisations relates to method and policy. I need not describe these differences in detail. In a sentence the I.L.P. regards Socialism, not as a distant ideal to be reached by a series of modifications of capitalism, but as an immediate necessity to be applied decisively, as soon as the power to apply it is obtained.

On August 5 this statement appears on page 3 of the *New Leader*. The Labour Party's object is Socialism and its programme (*i.e.*, the measures it advocates for attaining its objective) is socialistic.

But lo and behold, the next week on the same page reviewing the New Labour Programme (largely the old one rehashed) we are told : " The Labour Party proposals do not go further than attempts to control the capitalist system in such a manner as to iron out its irregularities and distribute its proceeds more equitably."

In short the I.L.P. has " broken " from the Labour Party, but as to what the Labour programme and policy really is, well one week it is socialist and the next week it is capitalist—you pay your money and you take your choice, or you change the record on the gramophone to suit the audience.

No Real Break with the Labour Party

Obviously so long as the I.L.P. holds to the estimation of the Labour Party's programme that is given by Mr. Brockway, there is no genuine break with the Labour Party, for this false estimation leaves—and is meant to leave—the road back to the Labour fold still open to the I.L.P.

Has the I.L.P. broken with the daily practice of the Labour Party ?

After the defeat of the Labour Government there was a strong tendency on the part of the Labour Party right wing to blame the apathy

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of the workers for the defeat of the Labour Party. To declare that the workers were hopeless, apathetic, ignorant and deserved to be allowed to starve.

This is also the main stock-in-trade of the I.L.P. leadership. In the midst of the terrific battle of the Lancashire cotton textile workers, of the resistance of the London busmen to cuts, of a rising wave of unemployed struggle, Mr. Brockway tells the world :

> The working class is fatalistic. It has lost faith in both the political and industrial movements and can see no way out. . . . . The working class must be shaken out of their fatalism by a policy which is distinctive from the past. Revolution—in the sense of a complete transformation —must replace reform.
>
> (Lecturer at Summer School reported *New Leader*, August 19, 1932.)

This gentleman said a few months after the formation of the National Government that the workers could not resist wage cuts successfully and what was wanted was a National Rent Strike.

If the I.L.P. had really broken with the Labour Party it would recognise the splendid militancy of the working class and would recognise that the first step in the organisation of the struggle of the working class for power, is the organisation of the working class for the struggle against the capitalist offensive.

This immediate task is, however, shirked. However much the I.L.P. may praise the militancy of the working class once the struggle has broken out it takes no part in preparing the struggle.

Instead it talks about apathy and : " revolution—in the sense of a complete transformation—must replace reform." (Brockway at I.L.P. Summer School.)

What does this latter phrase mean ? It does not mean that reformist policy must be replaced by revolutionary policy. It means that organisation of the struggle for the everyday demands of the working class—without which there can be no advance to the seizure of power by the workers—is replaced by propaganda generalities about socialist planning, &c., after the revolution. In the name of the replacement of Reform by Revolution the I.L.P. disorganises the present struggle of the working class. There is no break with the Labour Party policy here.

On the question of the war there was no break with the policy of the Labour Party. In one and the same resolution the League of Nations was denounced and the workers were asked to get " common action by the General Council of the T.U.C. and the National Executive of the Labour Party to bring effective pressure to bear upon the Government." This was issued at the very moment when those bodies were calling upon the Government to call upon the League of Nations to boycott Japan.

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Lest we imagine that the Bradford Conference changed all this, let us look at the new constitution adopted by the Conference.

The new I.L.P. constitution says " It (the I.L.P.) reaffirms its demand for disarmament by example, irrespective of what other governments may do."

There are only two meanings to this demand. Either the I.L.P. is saying that in a capitalist world driving headlong to a new war a capitalist government like the National Government can disarm, which is spreading a dangerous illusion amongst the workers that Disarmament is possible under capitalism, or it is asking the Government of the Soviet Union to disarm in face of the imperialists, which is treacherous in the highest degree.

The I.L.P. and the Conquest of Power

The fundamental test of a revolutionary party is its attitude to the taking of power by the working class.

We have already quoted the phrase of Brockway : " Revolution—in the sense of a complete transformation." This phrase embodies an old trick of reformists, employed frequently in times when there is a revolutionary ferment amongst the working class.

The phrase " Revolution " is employed by them frequently for the purpose of deluding the workers into believing that they mean the revolutionary seizure of power—when what they really mean is a " complete transformation " to be brought about in some mysterious way *without* the revolutionary seizure of power.

To a Marxist, revolution has one meaning—it means the forcible overthrow of the existing ruling class ; the revolutionary seizure of political power by a new social class aiming at the transformation of society. People who mean anything different from this should employ a word with different meanings.

What does the I.L.P. say about how the working class is to take power from the ruling class ?

One section of the " revolutionaries," led by Messrs. Beckett and Skinner, pin their faith to Parliament. At the Bradford Conference, according to the *New Leader :*

> He (Beckett) pointed out the difficulty of trying to fight parliamentary elections if the people at the same time had to be told that Parliament was of no use. If the I.L.P. did not believe in municipal and national government it would have to work underground to bring about a real revolution. He urged the I.L.P. should work through local and national machinery for government and man it with people it could trust.

Mr. Allan Skinner, discussing the relation between the I.L.P. and the C.P., at the I.L.P. Summer School, said :

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> The real difference between the bodies is that the I.L.P. are democrats and the C.P. are not. He doubted the view held by a certain section of the I.L.P. that before a socialist majority in Parliament can be secured there will be a reactionary dictatorship.
>
> He thought by preparing the minds of the workers for such a possibility the atmosphere is being created for a Fascist *coup d'etat*. The I.L.P. ought to be training the workers to use democratic machinery.

These two speeches are good old-fashioned Labour Party efforts. Messrs. Beckett and Skinner will be useful go-betweens when the time comes for the I.L.P. to return to the Labour Party fold.

Then there is Mr. Fenner Brockway, who makes what the *New Leader* calls an important contribution to this question :

> Governmental power by the workers, Mr. Brockway told the I.L.P. Summer School, would help that change, and the I.L.P. must go all out to get parliamentary and municipal power.
>
> The I.L.P. alone might not get that power, but Brockway took the view that community of conviction would be more important than organisational differences, and in the long run all Left Socialists must come together.
>
> But the critical situation may develop before we get parliamentary power, and because of that possibility the minds of the workers must be prepared for other action.

This is sheer confusion. There can be no really critical situation for capitalism independent of the struggle of the working class against capitalism. Brockway says to the workers, irrespective of what you do, a critical situation may arise and therefore you should be ready for it coming. Whereas, the really critical situation will only arise if the workers effectively develop the present struggle around war, wages, unemployment, &c. Not prepare for a critical situation, but develop the present struggles into a powerful political struggle for the overthrow of capitalism, must be the mainspring of our efforts. But to the I.L.P. which plays no part in organising the immediate struggle this is anathema.

But let us go on. A revolutionary situation according to the hypothesis has developed. The workers must either overthrow the capitalist class or be thrown back into the most abject slavery. There is, according to the hypothesis, only a Socialist minority in Parliament. What does Brockway suggest should be the I.L.P. attitude.

> With regard to Socialism, Brockway stated that capitalism is the greatest denial of Socialism, and in a revolutionary situation the pacifist cannot stand aside but must use his influence for the disciplined action of the working class to prevent or limit violence and bloodshed.

Can you believe it. At the decisive moment when the classes confront each other, when all the force at the disposal of the capitalist class will be mobilised to throw back the workers, when the preoccupation

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of every honest worker will be to mobilise every ounce of working-class force and employ it in the most ruthless and effective way against the class enemy—this pharasaical gang of counter revolutionaries will be preoccupied with " using their influence to prevent or limit bloodshed." In other words they will go to the working class facing a capitalist class armed to the teeth and pretend that there is some middle way of overthrowing the capitalist class, without using the utmost violence against it.

What this middle way is, is not stated by Mr. Brockway, but his colleague, Campbell Stephen, tells us that " I believe that in spite of all the talk of never again, it is only when the organised working class of this country make up their minds that the time is ripe for another General Strike, with the objective of taking power and sweeping away capitalism, that we shall have a growing organisation of the workers in the Trade Union movement."

If the I.L.P. leaders really believe that by a peaceful General Strike one can overthrow capitalism, one wonders where they were in 1926.

The outstanding lesson of that strike was that a General Strike calls up the whole armed forces of the capitalist State and presents the alternative of the strike developing into a revolutionary movement for the smashing of the capitalist State or the State advancing to smash the strike.

Naturally one cannot stage a General Strike at will nor develop that strike into an insurrection in the absence of a revolutionary situation which will in some measure affect the State forces. But given that situation the General Strike must develop into an insurrection to overthrow the capitalist class by force or it is doomed to defeat.

This is not the first occasion on which the idea of a peaceful General Strike has been held as the means of overthrowing the capitalist class. It was believed in by many left wing trade union leaders before 1926. The actual experience of a real General Strike and its problems not only cured those leaders of that delusion, but scared them into the arms of the right wing.

The conclusion is obvious. Has the I.L.P. changed. There is a deep change taking place amongst the rank and file undoubtedly. But in the leadership there is only some new phrases hiding the old reformist policy; new ways of sabotaging the growing movement of the British workers towards the acceptance of a revolutionary policy.

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THE FUTURE OF THE I.L.P.

What is a Revolutionary Policy ?

By AN EX-I.L.P.'er

[*We print this article from a recently active member of the I.L.P. for discussion, and invite contributions from Left I.L.P.'ers.*—ED. LABOUR MONTHLY.]

THE I.L.P. has broken with the Labour Party. To anyone who like myself, found his first political home in the I.L.P., who picked up his first political and economic theories at its Summer Schools, and whose first experience of practical work was on the packing cases and the broken chairs of its street corner speakers, that is deeply interesting news.

I left the I.L.P. sometime ago because I had come to feel that further association with the Labour Party was impossible. It looks as if it was this same motive which sent the majority of the delegates to the Bradford Conference with their minds made up that they had to disaffiliate. That at any rate is the dominant impression which one gets from reading their speeches. There runs through them a deep note of repugnance for what the Labour Party machine has become ; a note which expresses a final loss of faith in the present leaders of the Labour Party. These speeches were good reading for those of us who have all along maintained that the I.L.P. contained some of the very finest workers in this country. They were the speeches of men who had taken a long time to make up their minds that the leadership of the Labour Party was rotten to the core ; but who when they were finally sure of it, had acted without hesitation. That is the dominant impression which one gets, not only from reading the speeches of the delegates at Bradford, but from talking with individual I.L.P.ers in various parts of the country. These men and women have left the Labour Party because they have become convinced that no sincere Socialist can remain inside it.

I get another and equally strong impression : the I.L.P.ers who have carried disaffiliation, have not yet thought very much about the consequences. They have only left the Labour Party with the utmost reluctance, conscious of the gravity of the step they have taken ; but they have left it simply and solely because they were convinced that there was nothing else for them to do. They knew that they had to do the right thing : they have done it, and they have left the consequences to look after themselves.

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Such an attitude was, no doubt, inevitable. To break the historic association of the Labour Party and the I.L.P.—for the mother to disown her own child—was so grave a step that it required the whole energies and attention of the members of the branches. Now, however, the big step has been taken. And it is admittedly essential that I.L.P.ers should look forward not back; should think out their position until they know precisely where they are. For if separate and independent existence brings to the I.L.P. a new freedom, it also brings new and heavy responsibilities. The very existence of a separate political party, affiliated to no other organisation, implies that its members believe that they have both an ultimate object, and a policy for attaining that object, different from those of any other party, which they wish to recommend to the workers. Every working-class party offers, in effect, a leadership to the working class. It asks the workers to follow, and must explain to them both the goal it intends to make for and the methods it proposes for the journey.

It is, therefore, essential for the I.L.P., now that it is an entirely independent party, to become perfectly clear itself just where it stands, and then to explain to the workers precisely the line of action which it wishes them to pursue. For how tragic it would be if the I.L.P. told the workers, as it has done by its gesture of disaffiliation, that the Labour leaders, and the whole line of policy which the Labour Party has pursued, and is pursuing, are unworthy of their support, and then itself failed to provide the workers with any positive guidance. And it would be even worse if the I.L.P. provided the workers with guidance which proved misleading; which lead only to futility and the dissipation of the workers' efforts. That would be a dreadful result to follow from the sincere resolve of the I.L.P. members to have no further lot in the Labour Party.

And yet if the men and women who have cut adrift from the Labour Party are not able to achieve a comprehensive and coherent political philosophy, which can express itself in a practical method of dealing with the current problems of the struggle of the British workers; which offers them a method of winning that struggle; which is based on hard facts, and not on what it is easy and popular to pretend are the facts; then a terrible injury, instead of a service, will have been done to the workers of Britain by the setting up of another workers' party.

Now, what methods are there for conducting the struggle of the British workers? Hitherto, it has always been supposed that there were only two methods by which the working class could conduct its struggle for the power necessary to the establishment of Socialism. The first method was the "gradualistic" method which has been consistently pursued, under Labour Party leadership, by the majority of the British workers for the past thirty years. Now it is very easy for all of us to pour scorn on this method to-day. For we have in front of us the catastrophic

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results which it has achieved. We can see that by stages, which were imperceptible to most of us (certainly to me) at the time, but which we can now see to have been inevitable, the Labour Party became, not the workers' instrument for gradually taking the power to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism, but the instrument of the capitalist class for gradually inducing the workers to accept the heavy sacrifices necessary for the carrying on of British capitalism. There is no need for me to prove this statement here. For I take it that every I.L.P. member who voted for disaffiliation did so because he had finally come to this conclusion about the Labour Party. Disaffiliation can only be justified by a final conviction that the whole of the evolutionary principles and methods of the Labour Party are wrong. For if you consider that the present disasters of the workers have been the result of the accidental mistakes, or even of the betrayals, of particular leaders, then of course the proper thing to do would be to stay in the Labour Party and try to change its leadership.

Thus the I.L.P., by disaffiliating from the Labour Party, has rejected a whole political philosophy. What has it to put in its place? Now, everybody has hitherto believed that there is only one alternative. That alternative is revolutionary Marxism. And the practical politics of revolutionary Marxism must inevitably be, everyone has hitherto agreed, the politics of the Communist Parties. If the basis of action, built up by the considerable historical work of the Webbs and the other founders of the Labour Movement is rejected, then no one has up till now denied that the only remaining course of action is to assist the direct and immediate struggle of the workers against capitalism. And once that course of action has been adopted, it is perfectly clear that the struggle must be carried through to the decisive period when the workers make their bid for power. And no one in their senses has ever supposed that such a decisive period of revolution could be got through without violence being used both by the capitalists and by the workers. It is just because the rejection of the Labour Party's methods of gradualism clearly involved these exceedingly grave consequences that most people (including myself) have been slow and reluctant to reject them. It is now common ground between us all that they must be rejected—for they have led to the gross and unforgivable betrayal of every working-class interest.

But what is gravely disturbing is that there are no signs that the leaders of the I.L.P. have recognised that, having rejected the gradualist position, the revolutionary position must be adopted. It is true that the spokesmen of the I.L.P. have begun to use the word revolution. But as one reads their speeches, one discovers to one's dismay that they are trying to give the word some new meaning. They are careful to explain that they do not mean revolution in the ordinary straightforward sense of the word;

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that they do not mean that sooner or later the capitalists will face the workers with a situation in which there will be no alternative between open servitude in the factories, slaughter on the field of battle, and the forcible overthrow of capitalism by the workers. Thus Fenner Brockway tells us that it is the function of the I.L.P. to contribute " a pacifist technique of revolution." Again, at the recent I.L.P. Summer School, he said that he used the word revolution " in the sense of complete transformation." At the same time, Maxton says that he objects to the Communist Party because it is " ultra-revolutionary."

These statements make it distressingly clear that the I.L.P. leaders are looking for some middle ground between the evolutionary and the revolutionary position. If the Communists are " ultra-revolutionary," Maxton wants to be moderately revolutionary. Fenner Brockway wants to be revolutionary, but to have " a pacifist technique of revolution." He wants the revolution to take the form of " a complete transformation."

Now, the single point which I, in this article, want to make to the men and women of the I.L.P., with whom I have worked for many years, and whose worth I know, is this : *There is not, and there cannot, be any middle ground between the evolutionary and the revolutionary position.* I implore my old comrades not to give themselves any rest till they have finally satisfied themselves on this point. For unless they do, I fear that they will find that by their very act of disaffiliation from the Labour Party, no matter how well intentioned they were, they have done a terrible disservice to the workers ; that they have confused, distracted and impeded the workers at the very moment of their most desperate need.

I ask the members of the I.L.P. to face with absolute frankness the simple question of whether there can be such a thing as a moderately revolutionary policy, whether there can be " a pacifist technique of revolution " ; whether there can be " revolution in the sense of complete transformation." I ask them to look into their own consciences and examine whether men who use these phrases are not simply trying to escape the desperately unpleasant, but quite inevitable, consequences of having rejected the gradualist position ?

Can we escape the conclusion that Brockway and Maxton, neither of them stupid men, are simply unwilling to face up to the necessary consequences of their own actions in recommending disaffiliation ?

I am afraid that what will happen is this. After a year or so of propaganda of the present easy and vague type, in which all the hard unpleasant issues will be passed over in silence, it will have become clear that there *is* no ground between evolution and revolution. Then, say just before the next General Election (on the assumption that there *is* another general election) the Labour Party will get in touch with the

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I.L.P. again in order to avoid "splitting the workers' vote." An arrangement in the constituencies will follow. The way will have been paved for the return of the I.L.P. to the Labour Party. Quite frankly I am convinced that in the case of the present I.L.P. leaders: Fenner Brockway, Maxton, Buchanan, McGovern and the others, this is what will happen. (Some of them may drop out of politics altogether.) These men are constitutionally incapable of becoming revolutionary leaders—and here I speak of what I know. And unless they become revolutionaries in the real and deeply serious sense of the word, they will have no alternative but to go back to the Labour Party. It is impossible indefinitely to be a revolutionary "in the sense of a complete transformation." Transformation scenes are confined to the stage of old-fashioned pantomimes. On the stage, it is possible to transform the ugly ogre's castle into a smiling promised land by an apparently magical process. But a belief in the reality of such a process has been, hitherto, confined to those of an age to attend the Christmas Pantomime.

The extinction of the present I.L.P. leaders or their return to the Labour Party is therefore inevitable. It will then be apparent that all they will have done by disaffiliation is to have responded to the mood of the moment, which is one of intense dissatisfaction with the Labour Party.

But if this is inevitable in the case of the present leaders, is it inevitable in the case of the best individual members of the I.L.P. ? I am sure that it is not. The fact that they have come to the conclusion that gradualism and the Labour Party are impossible, provides them with the right basis from which to carry through their thinking to the logical conclusion that the only alternative is a genuine and serious revolutionary policy.

For the politics of a great capitalist empire such as Britain cannot be played with. There is no room in them for fancy policies and programmes, no hope that the gigantic forces which are becoming ever more rigidly aligned against each other, can be cajoled or persuaded into sacrificing their own essential interests in order to avoid a fight to a finish. In politics the fundamental issues are always broad and simple. To-day, in Britain they can all be reduced to the one simple issue of whether we are for or against the workers' struggle. There is no longer any room at all for "policies"—living wage policies, currency policies, or any other policies. For such policies are all in fact suggested methods of getting capitalism out of its crisis without sacrificing the workers' interests. And that, again, is the old gradualist policy of the Labour Party which the I.L.P. has just rejected.

I know that there are hundreds of I.L.P. members who will throw themselves without reserve into the workers' struggle, and will put aside the dreams and illusions, which we have all entertained, of easy and painless ways out of the crisis. And this, I think, is the essential thing.

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For when they are engaged in aiding, side by side with everyone else who is willing to join in the work, the present desperate struggles of the workers to prevent their reduction to a misery unknown in Britain for fifty years at least, the logical necessity of pushing those struggles through to the seizure of power by the workers will become obvious.

One further point. In discussing this situation with a fine I.L.P. comrade recently, I was confronted with this argument. "Yes, all you say seems to be true; but if we adopt this line we shall find ourselves taking up almost the same position as the Communists." I replied, quite frankly, that this was so. But was the fact that it might lead to association with people whom you disliked a good reason to take up a position which you were convinced was logically unsound? Surely, it is impossible for members of the I.L.P. to refuse to do their duty to the workers simply because the Communists are already doing theirs?

Frankly I believe that honest and clear thinking on the part of every Socialist must now lead him to the conclusion that the Communists have proved right. He may object to the Communist Party, to its "rigidity" or to its attacks on the I.L.P., for instance; but after all have we any right to weigh such things as whether someone's feelings have or have not been hurt against the vital fact that the whole revolutionary Marxist view of politics, of which the Communist parties strive to be the practical expression, has been proved by the irrefutable logic of events to be right? Moreover, the more we examine the question, the more we shall see that those features of the methods of the Communist Party which at first sight seem to be ill-advised, clumsy and untactful, are the necessary consequence of refusing to tell the workers pleasant untruths, instead of unpleasant truths, about their situation.

But can we refuse to tell the workers the truth, can we knowingly and consciously deceive, confuse and perhaps ruin them, just because someone else, whose manners we do not like, has discovered that truth before we did?

What other course is open to the disaffiliated members of the I.L.P.? What alternative is there between evolution and revolution? It is very much to be hoped that a thorough discussion of these issues will now take place in the LABOUR MONTHLY. It is the duty of every I.L.P. member, who believes that he has something different from either the gradualism of the Labour Party, or the revolutionary Marxism of the Communist Party, to offer to the workers, to define his position both in these columns and elsewhere, so that he may himself see whether it can stand analysis and discussion.

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THE NEWCASTLE CONGRESS

By W. ALLAN

THE British Trades Union Congress, meeting at Newcastle on the 5th September, is one of the largest working-class organisations in the world outside of the trade unions of the Soviet Union. At the Congress of 1931, 3,719,401 members were directly represented, but the trade unions affiliated to the T.U.C. have powerful influence on millions of workers who are not union members. Thus in Britain the Trades Union Congress is an organisation of the first importance. This also applies internationally, as the T.U.C. is the largest bloc within the International Federation of Trade Unions, the so-called "Amsterdam" International. The General Secretary of the T.U.C., Mr. W. Citrine, is the President of the International.

The Congress is being held at a moment of fierce and renewed attack upon all sections of the working class, both employed and unemployed. This fresh wave is following upon the heels of a steady process of attack against the wages and working conditions of the workers over the past period. In 1930 the workers lost £5,600 per week from their wages. In 1931 this cut jumped to the colossal total of £401,150 per week. Since the beginning of the present year the wages of the employed workers in those industries where the workers are organised, have fallen by over £162,000 per week.

In addition to direct cuts there hovers the daily threat and menace of insecurity over the employed workers. No worker is now sure of his job, even for the following week. Mass dismissals are taking place in every industry, including the so-called luxury and sheltered industries. On the railways thousands of railway and shop workers have already been dismissed, and tens of thousands more are threatened by the new pooling schemes of the railway companies. The shipbuilding, metal, and building industries steadily report fresh laying off of workers; in the mining industry whole areas are being left derelict and in entire counties the workers are only getting three and four days work (and wages) per week.

The total of unemployed is officially given at 2,811,782. Over one million workers are on the Means Test and about 400,000 of them have been cut off benefit entirely. This number is being steadily added to every week. The final report of the Unemployed Commission is being got ready, and is reported to contain a whole series of further disqualifications and reductions of benefits for the unemployed workers.

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Under tariffs the working class is finding that the cost of living is beginning to rise in spite of the fact that world prices continue to fall.

This attack on all sections of the workers in Britain goes along with the drive towards a new world war. Japan has and is being assisted in waging war in Manchuria. At Lausanne, the British capitalists strove to secure a European alliance formed against the Soviet Union and against the United States of America; at Ottawa similar attempts at a bloc are being made, the inducements held out being tariff preferences, higher food prices for the workers, and a blockade against the trade of the Soviet Union; and in Ireland British Imperialism is deliberately and openly crushing Ireland into submission by the attempt to ruin Irish trade by the imposition of heavy tariffs on Irish goods.

The very strength of the British T.U.C. is a measure of the work and sacrifice that has been put forward by countless workers in building it up. Endless numbers of struggles and strikes have taken place in the past to win for the workers the right to organise themselves and to secure recognition for their trade union organisations.

What has the Congress done, and how have the Congress leaders faced up to the tasks for which the workers have built the unions and for which they now pay in their hard-won sixpences and shillings? The answer is clear. The trade union leaders have done nothing to unite the workers in resistance to the employers' attacks, but on the contrary, have done their utmost to root out all militant outlook and policy from the unions, to prohibit from holding office, or expel militant members and to help the employers to carry through their attacks to a successful conclusion.

Four years ago in its report to the Trades Union Congress in 1928, the General Council examined three lines of policy. It rejected the policy of revolutionary trade unionism aiming at the overthrow of the capitalist system, because, so it asserted, it would reduce society to chaos and the workers themselves would suffer; and that of the sectional strike because the employers were too strong and could easily defeat this policy and that it would not win for the worker a share in the control of industry that was essential.

The third policy, that of co-operating with the employers in order to make industry more efficient, was enthusiastically recommended by the General Council. They claimed that if the unions and the employers' organisations worked together they could make industry more prosperous and higher wages and higher profits would then be the rule.

This policy of rationalisation and industrial peace, while it was being forced through, was stated by the General Council in its report to "afford the best hope of raising the status, security, and standard of living of the workers, whom the Council represents." It was to restore prosperity to

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British industry; enable the employers to increase wages and reduce hours; reduce unemployment; and give the trade unions as representatives of the workers, a certain control over the rationalisation of industry, so that the conditions of the workers would be adequately protected.

What have been the results of this policy? The answer is to be found in hundreds of working-class homes, and the chronic poverty of the workers. By speed-up and rationalisation, by "co-operating with the employers to make industry more efficient" the output of the workers in all industry has been enormously increased. By 1930 the output of the workers had increased by 21 per cent. over that of 1924. In a number of particular industries the output increase far exceeded this average. But this increased output did not bring "the higher wages and reduced unemployment" that had been promised. Instead of this it brought for all workers the opposite in lowered wages and increased unemployment.

The number of miners fell from 1,037,301 in 1927 to just over 820,000 in 1931, and the annual wages paid fell by over £16,000,000 in the same period. The speed of work of the miner was increased, the output was lifted up to higher heights—but these results have been gained out of the toil and sweat, the inhumanly intensified exploitation of the miners. Every industry has the same story to tell. The net output per worker in the shipbuilding industry rose from £169 in 1924 to £210 in 1930, but the wages of the workers were slashed, old-customs abolished, and the percentage of unemployed workers rose to 59 per cent. of all employed in the industry. On one railway alone, the L.M.S., 33,059 workers have been dismissed since 1927 and similar efficiency was secured on the other lines.

In the same period the standards of the unemployed workers, far from being protected, have been lowered by reductions in benefit, by speedier disqualifications, by the Anomalies Act, and the Means Test. Despite the terrible conditions created for the unemployed workers, the great employers' organisations with which the General Council of the T.U.C. continues to co-operate, the Confederation of Employers, and the Federation of British Industries—now both demand the further drastic cutting down of unemployed relief and the social services.

To-day all these attacks are being intensified. At the moment almost half a million weavers and spinners in the cotton textile industry and the transport workers of London, are confronted with demands for heavy wage cuts, the railway workers, the London dockers, and the metal workers of South Wales are being faced with long lists of demands for the serious worsening of their working conditions and rates of pay. The Unofficial Committee set up by Conservative Members of Parliament is

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calling for a further hundred million pounds of economies in social services and against the employed and unemployed workers. But the workers have not submitted tamely to the attacks, as has been shown by the many strikes that have taken place, most of them in defiance of the trade union leaders.

Against all the past attacks, and in face of these now being opened up, the Trades Union Congress, the highest expression of the organised working class, has consistently refused to take the most elementary steps for rallying the workers against the encroachments on their standards and for uniting the workers in support against attacked sections. But instead of support, every movement of the workers has been met by a whole series of splitting tactics on the part of the leaders of the trade unions affiliated to the T.U.C. The miners have been allowed to fight in single districts of Scotland, Wales, Cumberland, Bristol, and while each such fight was being actively discouraged by the miners' leaders, the miners in the rest of the country were being urged to continue at work. This policy of splitting the workers for the benefit of the employers, showed itself in the Transport and General Workers' Union last January, when the London dockers were on strike, and members of the same union were being allowed, and even instructed to handle " black " goods.

In the textile struggles the forces of the workers have been split time after time, and everything done to prevent the demand of the workers for united action for " All Out " from being put into effect. Against the big offensives of British capitalism, against the Means Test, against the intensifying war danger, no steps were taken to convene conferences of the workers, but on the contrary, continual statements and manœuvres made to prevent the rank and file from coming together in militant action against these attacks.

The Agenda for the Congress contains no plan for meeting the gigantic onslaughts upon the workers' standards, and fails to even mention the necessity for this being done. The openly expressed threats of the employers to further lower the standard of the British working class are allowed to go by unchallenged. Instead of dealing with the things for which the workers have built up the unions, and to-day pay for them, the General Council is specially concerning itself with bringing forward proposals and schemes such as that for the National Control of Industry. An examination of these proposals shows them to be the logical continuation of the policy of the past four years, aiming at a still further " efficiency " of the industries.

Of course plenty of references are made to the " safeguarding of the workers' conditions," but these can be as light-heartedly voiced now as they were when the present policy of the T.U.C. was being brought forward, or as they were last year when the T.U.C. passed a resolution

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deploring the separate existence of " four private rail companies, involving wasteful competition, overlapping, and the conveyance of traffic by circuitous routes." The resolution goes on to say that "it (the T.U.C.) is convinced of the complete unification of the railway system and their co-operation with other forms of transport," and stressed its belief that these steps could be taken without depressing the conditions of those engaged in the industry. The operation of the present pool scheme resulting in the stopping of many trains, the taking of traffic over the shortest routes between the two main systems, the closing of stations and offices, the carrying of full loads on every occasion, &c., &c., have already started to bring unemployment, transfers, degrading and lower wages to many tens of thousands of railway workers, and gives only a further example of how utterly hypocritical and misleading all this talk really is.

Very few workers are aware of the decisions of the T.U.C. or even of the date when it meets, or the sort of delegates who attend it. It is a very rare thing for the Agenda to be considered even by high-up committees in the unions, and it certainly never comes before the Union members in the branches. Resolutions for the next Congress have usually to be passed by annual conferences of the affiliated unions, which means from seven to ten months before the Congress takes place. The issuing of the General Council report, containing very important proposals on policy just a few weeks before the Congress, completely prevents the workers from getting the chance to discuss them if they adhere to the usual Union routine for sending for amendments. At the end of the Congress practically no reports are made by the delegates or unions to the branches and members.

All the delegates to this year's Congress at Newcastle will have to face very heavy responsibilities indeed. They will have to face the question whether they are prepared to fall in with these vile schemes of the leaders designed still further to increase the misery of the workers by new schemes of rationalisation. Whether they are prepared to join the leaders in refusing to mobilise the organised and unorganised supporters of the T.U.C. behind a nation-wide resistance to the gigantic new offensive which the employing class has now launched on the workers. Already the workers in place after place as in Lancashire have broken through this policy of the leaders to suppress all resistance to the capitalist attacks.

It will be the task of every militant worker at the Congress to bring forward sharply the evidence of the will of the workers, who are experiencing the direct results of " Rationalisation," to fight against the attacks of the employers. Coming as they do on the eve of the Congress, the mighty struggle of the cotton workers and the fighting decisions of the busmen are evidence of the fact that the workers are not prepared to submit to worsening conditions. Armed with the details of the

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effects of the Eight Looms, the Railway Pool, the London Passenger Transport Bill, the Mines Reorganisation Scheme, militant delegates can expose the T.U.C. schemes of " industrial efficiency " as direct policies for helping the employers to intensify the exploitation of the workers. The past year has yielded sufficient evidence, as the preceding paragraphs show, of the fact that the " restoration of prosperity " under capitalism means the restoration of profits at the expense of the workers' conditions.

Further, the struggles of the past year enable the militant delegates to reply in a concrete manner to the T.U.C. propaganda about " splitters and disrupters." The Lightermen's strike, the fight against Bedaux, the Cotton struggle, all give evidence of the fact that only when the workers themselves have taken action, have refused to submit to the policy of the T.U.C., but have gone forward to strike action, mass picketing, election of rank and file strike committees, that the employers have been defeated. It will be the duty of the militant delegates to bring out clearly the contrast between the T.U.C. sabotage of the W.I.R.'s work in support of the cotton workers and the response the W.I.R. has received from the rank and file of the unions and local T.U. branches. The contrast between the T.U.C.'s submission to the anti-T.U. Bill and the struggle waged by the Burnley strikers, who have smashed through the Blacklegs' " Charter " by mass picketing, again is further proof of the anti-working class character of the T.U.C. policy.

But exposure of the character of the T.U.C. policy is not enough. The fight must be brought outside the Congress. In the day-to-day struggle of the workers the influence of the T.U.C. is still powerful, splitting, sidetracking and when necessary, directly crushing the fight of the workers. After the Congress the militant delegates have the task of bringing before the workers, by Branch discussion and reports to special meetings where possible, the real meaning of the T.U.C. decisions. They must continue their struggle at the Congress by participating after the Congress in the work of building up the workers' resistance to all attacks, by strengthening within the unions every oppositionist movement of the workers against the present official policy, explaining to each section of the workers: miners, textile workers, engineers, &c., what the T.U.C. policy means for them, so that when the next T.U. Congress takes place, not only will there be a strong militant group *within* the Congress, but also a powerful rank-and-file militant opposition throughout the movement, uniting the workers in their daily struggle and yielding such support to the militant workers within the Congress that will cause even the pundits of " Mondism " to recognise that the workers are no longer prepared to submit to their treachery.

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ON OUR STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM[1]

By ERNST THAELMANN

THE economic basis of the advance to an open Fascist Dictatorship, the foundation upon which has developed the acute transition of the bourgeoisie to fascist methods of rule—such as is expressed in the displacement of the Bruening Government by the Fascist Papen-Schleicher Government—is the further accentuation of the economic crisis and, connected with it, the terrific sharpening of the class struggle.

The Papen Government quite openly announced in its declaration of policy that it " demands gigantic sacrifices from the people." The reactionary social administration which preceded it is characterised as " State Socialism," and its politics are called " welfare " politics. With such words—which must appear to the hungry, over-taxed millions as a piece of derisive insolence, a capitalist offensive against the toilers of hitherto unparalleled brutality is inaugurated by the ruling class.

The *Berliner Boersen-Zeitung*, a journal of finance capital, which stands very close to the new Government, writes in its issue of June 7th, 1932 :

> Certainly extreme want exists in some places . . . Nevertheless, in 1931, the standard of food, clothing and housing of the German people taken as a whole was greater than in 1913 ; but this is incompatible with their very greatly reduced income. . . . This increasingly low-level of existence is the only possibility for a revival of production and thereby for the lessening of unemployment. . . . More work and simpler life, this is the unavoidable fate for Germany.

It is hardly necessary to state what lies hidden behind this " poetic " phrase ; a new immeasurably increased campaign of robbery against wages and salaries. A terrific onslaught on all the benefits of the unemployed, the complete abolition of social insurance. In other words, the strangling of all the rights of the working class and other toilers, the destruction of the workers' organisations, the transformation of Germany into a prison house of capitalist forced labour, militarised plunder and slavery. The first emergency decrees of the Papen Government already show that it is firmly determined to transform this programme into action.

[1]These are extracts, specially translated for the LABOUR MONTHLY, from a comprehensive article with this title by the leader of the German Communist Party which appeared in *Die Internationale* (No. 6 of 1932), its theoretical organ.

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The S.P.D. remains the Chief Social Support of the Bourgeoisie

If, at the present time, the German bourgeoisie is busy providing for the better reciprocal utilisation of its various supports—that in no way means as we see it—simply that the National Socialists step into the shoes of Social Democracy. This would be conceivable—theoretically—if the Hitler Party in a fully developed Fascist Dictatorship after the destruction of the reformist organisations, would attract to itself very considerable sections of the working class, if the S.P.D. were to sink to insignificance among the proletariat, without we communists being in the position to win over its masses. That would be roughly the case as it was in Italy. In Germany, with its enormous industrial proletariat and strong communist party, such a perspective is even theoretically improbable in view of the whole objective pre-conditions. The prevention of such a danger by means of the greatest courage in the revolutionary class struggle and the development of all the anti-Fascist forces of the masses depends, of course, practically on our own struggle, on our correct strategy and methods.

What, however, is the situation to-day? Social Democracy as hitherto has a decisively dominating control over those sections of the working class not yet influenced by the revolutionary workers, above all over an overwhelming section of the factory workers. To be sure, the Hitler Party has also penetrated into the ranks of the proletariat—above all amongst the unemployed and certain backward sections. But the proletarian supporters of the National Socialists are, as previously, not so important from the standpoint of the maintenance of capitalist class rule, that they would "replace," for example, the four million workers organised in the A.D.G.B. (the German T.U.C.), who together with the members of other reformist mass organisations, are yoked by the reformist leaders to the chariot of the bourgeoisie.

If this fact is kept in view it follows that the S.P.D. constitutes, as previously, the main social support of the bourgeoisie. One of the leaders of the A.D.G.B. once asserted that "against the Trade Unions no Government in Germany could last 24 hours." Naturally, this is only relatively correct, but it indicates the rôle of the S.P.D. and A.D.G.B. leaders, also as against the Papen Government. Were all the masses under the control of the A.D.G.B. organisations to participate in a political mass strike under our leadership, the Papen Government, despite its Reichswehr and police, would scarcely be able to withstand such a political mass strike, or even a General Strike.

In other words, the Papen Government also exists with the help of the S.P.D. It exists, thanks to the fact that the S.P.D. and A.D.G.B. keep their influence to-day over many millions of workers, amongst

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them very decisive sections of the proletariat. They isolate these millions from the revolutionary class front, and in given instances even set them actively against the revolutionary class struggle.

There is obviously no doubt in our minds that the A.D.G.B. bureaucracy and the S.P.D. leaders will, under no circumstances, depart from this policy. On the contrary, the S.P.D. already is now setting going new manœuvres of deception in the interests of the Papen Government. Its insolent slanders against the Communist Party, against our alleged " crazy talk about a General Strike " shows how the professional Labour traitors quake at the prospect of a real mass struggle against the bourgeoisie.

For this reason the S.P.D. comes forth with new manœuvres of deception on a grand scale. Not mass struggle, demonstrations, strikes, or political mass strike, but the " ballot paper " is to be the means of struggle which will prevent the establishment of the Fascist Dictatorship. This deception is all the more insolent since the S.P.D. workers have already been dragged to the ballot box three times by the S.P.D. leaders, with the same lying promise that " Fascism can be smashed by the ballot paper." At the same time the S.P.D. is already at pains to designate the Papen Government as a " lesser evil " as against a pure Nazi Government and therewith to carry over the old methods of deception into the new situation.

In the fascisation of Social Democracy a whole gamut of the most diverse methods and phenomena reach maturity. Certain sections of the leadership of the S.P.D. adapt themselves to the new conditions of the Fascist form of domination by going to the same lengths as D'Aragona before them did in Italy. They pass over pretty directly to the Hitler Party, like the former Government President, Gruetzner, and the former Prussian Minister of the Interior, Waentig. Horsing, the former Reichsbanner leader, sets up his own little show, from which he also already speaks in a relatively open Fascist style. And so it goes on, right to the " left " agents of the S.P.D., the S.A.P., and the tiny Brandler Group, who are the most dangerous disruptors of the proletarian United Front, in the service of the bourgeoisie and Fascism. Thus, in the most diverse forms, the Social Fascist deception of the masses is operated in this period of an intense sharpening in the class struggle.

While the Social-Democratic workers are also beginning to recognise the extra-parliamentary mass struggle as the only means of struggle against the Papen Government and Hitler Fascism, the S.P.D. as a party knows only one aim—to defeat this mass struggle by every means in their power.

All this explains why we speak with the fullest justification of Social Democracy now, just as previously, as the chief social support of the bourgeoisie and why we base our strategy on this understanding.

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Our Revolutionary Strategy

What conclusion can we draw for our strategy and tactics from the above analysis of the present situation? The aim of our struggle is the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the abolition of the Dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in all its forms. This concretely, means in the present situation, that we must carry on our fight with the aim of destroying the Papen Government, together with its terror and fighting organisation —the Hitler Party, and that we must concentrate all our forces to this end.

What strategy must we apply in this struggle against the chief enemy —the bourgeoise? We must win the decisive strata of that class, which is alone "revolutionary to the end" and therefore capable of being a leading force in the achievement of this aim—the overthrow of capitalism. That class is the working class.

In other words, we must continue unchanged with our chief strategical task, which the recent February Plenum of our Central Committee formulated as follows, corresponding to the line of the Communist International: Winning the majority of the working class for the struggle for the conquest of political power.

On the basis of our class policy we must, in the new situation, apply the strategy of the "main fire against Social Democracy" more than ever before, without the slightest concessions to any kind of Social Democratic fraudulent manœuvres in opportunist tendencies. What does this signify?

Our struggle for the abolition of the bourgeois Dictatorship makes it our indispensable duty to win millions of workers from the S.P.D. and A.D.G.B. for the anti-fascist and anti-capitalist front, through the energetic concentration of our work on the factories.

So long as these millions of workers are not freed from the influence of the Social-Fascist leaders, so long are they lost to the anti-fascist struggle. Therefore our most important strategic task remains as before to isolate the leaders of the S.P.D. and A.D.G.B. in the working class. For this isolation of the Social-Fascists is synonymous with the task of winning the majority of the working class for the conquest of political power.

Nothing has changed as far as this principle orientation of ours is concerned.

Through our revolutionary practice we must put a stop to all speculations about a change of front, a new departure or a right vacillation on the part of the Communist Party of Germany.

"Bloc-building" or United Front from Below

This strategic orientation of the chief fire against the Social Democracy within the working class, does not in the least signify any weakening

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of our fight against Hitler-Fascism—as the slanderers of the Communist Party—such as those cast in the mould of Leo Trotsky above all assert. On the contrary it is an indispensable corollary, an essential prerequisite for a successful struggle against the Fascist Dictatorship. Mr. Trotsky occupies himself anew at the present time in the service of the German bourgeoisie in carrying through definite deceptive manœuvres against the class-conscious German workers. He preaches a " bloc " of the C.P.G. and the S.P.D. " against Fascism." A considerable part of the bourgeois press accords him vociferous applause for this.

Of late the official leadership of German Social Democracy is also beginning to play with the ball thrown down by Trotsky, and is attempting to cover up its real struggle against the proletarian United Front, against the anti-fascist mass struggle under revolutionary leadership, by treacherous " United Front " manœuvres and " bloc " proposals to the C.P.G. The intervention of Stampfer, the chief Editor of *Vorwaerts*, a member of the E.C. of the S.P.D., at the meeting of the Hamburg S.P.D. functionaries, of the Afa League President, Hufhauser, in the " leaders' appeal " at the Berlin Demonstration of the so-called " Iron Front," on June 9th, as well as Kuenstler's [2] " two questions" of June 14th indicate the dexterous social-fascist tactics on this question. In the measure that the prerequisites for the fighting anti-fascist united front grow quickly as a result of the rebellion of the S.P.D. workers, the Social Fascist leaders of the S.P.D. and A.D.G.B. carry through their counter-blows through sham radical deceptive manœvres of the type utilised by Stampfer, Hoeltermann, Kuenstler, &c. In this connection, the S.A.P. (Socialist Labour Party, the breakaway from the S.P.D.) leaders and the Brandlerites outdo the big bugs of the S.P.D. in this kind of " radicalism," which, however, has nothing whatever to do with any reflection of the honest radicalisation of the S.P.D. workers.

We do not intend to oppose the task of struggle against Social Democracy to that of struggle against the Hitler Party or temporarily to detach the one from the other. Trotsky's absurd idea that the Communists wish " first of all " to strike at Social Democracy in order " then " to attack Hitler-Fascism, although it corresponds to that mechanical method of thought which he never overcame even in his better days, has, however, not the slightest connection with the reality of Communist policy.

Turned the other way round: Mr. Trotsky and similar " advisers " of the proletariat wish to propose a policy to the working class, such as separates and opposes the fight of the revolutionary party against Fascism to that against Social Fascism, the fight against the Hitler Party to that against Social Democracy. According to this recipe the

[2] Leader of the Berlin organisation of the S.P.D.

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Communist Party should now renounce its struggle against Social Democracy, make a "bloc" with the Party of Hindenberg Socialism and "fight" Hitler in this way.

Mr. Trotsky dares to justify his counter-revolutionary proposal by a reference to the tactic of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917 on the occasion of the Kornilov Putsch. It is difficult to conceive of a more insolent falsification of Lenin's policy. If one permits the somewhat contestable comparison between the present situation in Germany and the situation in Russia in 1917 prior to the Kornilov Putsch, then Lenin's tactics at the time completely justifies the policy at present being carried through by the C.P.G.

What tactic did Lenin recommend—when, in view of the first rumours of an impending putsch on the part of the Cossack regiments, the Mensheviks proposed a bloc with the Bolsheviks—which according to Trotsky's formula has its counterpart in Herr Stampfer and the C.P.G.? Lenin wrote a letter at the end of August, 1917, in which he said:

> It is hard to believe that there are to be found such simpletons and scamps amongst the Bolsheviks as those who are prepared to be partners to a bloc with the Defenders of the Fatherland. . . . One does not negotiate with people who have gone over finally into the enemies' camp. One concludes no blocs with such people.

The Bolshevik reply to any bloc proposal by the Mensheviks must —so wrote Lenin—run as follows:

> Of course we will fight. We will, however, pass no votes of confidence in you—just as the Social-Democrats fought together with the Cadets against Czarism in 1917, without concluding any kind of alliance with them, without having any faith in them even for one moment. The slightest confidence in the Mensheviki to-day would be as much a betrayal of the Revolution as any confidence in the Cadets would have been in the years 1907-17.

With the same clarity we German Communists must to-day tell the working class: It is not possible to smash Hitler-Fascism, without at the same time conducting the sharpest struggle also against Social Democracy as well; without fighting for its isolation, without a struggle for the detachment of the millions of workers organised in the Free Trade Unions from the influence of the A.D.G.B. leaders; without the establishment of the common fighting front with these workers, against whom the S.P.D. leaders fight with all the methods of slander, demagogy, and deceptive manœuvres.

It is not possible to carry through the struggle successfully against the main enemy—the Papen Government and its National Socialist myrmidons without the strategy of directing the main fire against Social Democracy within the working-class movement, without this strategy of struggle for the majority of the working class. Not a bloc policy

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with the Social Fascist leaders, nor under any circumstances a united front policy only from above, but a united front from below, on the basis of the factories and labour exchanges, on the basis of a mass mobilisation for the fight—this is the policy which corresponds to the situation to-day. This does not preclude the employment in a revolutionary manner and above all at a stage of highly developed mass movement of the united front tactic from above and from below in certain cases.

How Must the United Tactic be Used?

In the interest of a strengthened development of the united front from below amongst the masses for common struggle, the question as to whether or not we make simultaneous approaches to the leading circles of the S.P.D., A.D.G.B., &c., depends on two decisive prerequisites. Firstly, the mobilisation for the establishment of the common front of struggle must have attained such a degree amongst the masses, that a request to the leaders from our side will release a real echo below amongst the membership of the A.D.G.B. organisations, or the supporters of the S.P.D. Secondly, in the given concrete conditions the surety must exist, that our approach to the higher bodies does not weaken the will of the Social Democratic and non-party workers for independent steps for the establishment of the proletarian united front against Fascism, or transform their activity into a certain waiting to see " if those at the top will unite," but on the contrary strengthens the mass initiative. Naturally, these two aspects cannot be separated from each other.

The decisive thing is that we always create the basis for actions, for real deeds of struggle, for the real anti-fascist mass struggle, below amongst the masses. With the swift tempo of development there can be no hard and fast scheme for our tactics. The Party must react quickly and carry through those steps which are adapted to the temporary conditions of every situation which develop the fighting power of the working class to the highest possible degree. The unconditional maintenance of our revolutionary class line, the defence without confusion of our revolutionary strategy, demands at the same time the sharpest struggle against the other kind of mistakes and distortions—those which have arisen in the carrying out of this line in practice.

Have we correctly applied our correct line? Have there not been sectarian opinions on the questions of the united front tactic, which, after all, constitutes an indispensable constituent part of our revolutionary policy for winning the proletarian majority and therewith also our fight against the S.P.D.? Without a doubt the practical policy of our party in this connection has weaknesses which we must liquidate without fail.

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It is absolutely inadmissible to try to palliate or excuse any kind of lagging behind in the struggle against the Hitler Party by the strategic orientation of the main fire against Social Democracy.

It is inadmissible to interpret this revolutionary strategy as implying that it suffices constantly to chatter about the treachery of the S.P.D., without, at the same time, continuously convincing the Social Democratic workers in a comradely way, by our whole practice, that we are the only anti-Fascist Party, the Party of real struggle against Hitler-Fascism, and beyond that, against capitalism as a whole—the only Party of Marxism and the Proletarian Revolution.

The actual observance of this revolutionary strategy in the struggle for the majority of the working class, also demands that we must be able to answer the question, how best do we smash Social Democracy, how do we isolate it most successfully? And it is clear that the Social Democratic and free trade union workers can only be detached from Social Democracy by drawing them, through the application of the united front tactic, into the common fighting front with the revolutionary workers of the C.P.G. and the R.G.O.[3] into the anti-Fascist mass struggle against Papen and Hitler, into the anti-Fascist struggle for daily demands and for the class aims of the proletariat.

Is this a new conclusion? No, that is not the case. Precisely on the basis of the experience of the revolutionary work of our Party, we discussed these tactical problems in full agreement with the E.C.C.I. at the 11th Plenum more than a year ago. At that time, already it was pointed out that we have learnt precisely from the experiences of the German Party how necessary it is to prove to the masses, by our policy as a whole, by all our deeds and acts and through the agitation and propaganda, that we are the only anti-Capitalist Party, the only anti-Fascist force, which leads the struggle against Fascism and the bourgeoisie. At that time it was already asserted that we cannot smash Social Fascism if we do not succeed in mobilising the Social Democratic workers for the struggle against Fascism under the leadership of the Communist Party.

[3]Revolutionaire Gewerkshafts Opposition (Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition).

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BOOK REVIEW

LENIN AND THE CONQUEST OF POWER

The Paris Commune. By V. I. Lenin. Little Lenin Library No. 5. (Martin Lawrence Ltd.) 62 pp. 1s.

THE Paris Commune—the facts of its existence, its weaknesses, mistakes and achievements, are still, we must confess, in this country matters of knowledge to but a limited number of revolutionary workers.

At best there takes place once a year, in a limited number of places a series of memorial meetings where we pledge ourselves to carry on the glorious traditions of the immortal Communards.

Yet, as Lenin says, " with all its errors, the Commune is the greatest example of the greatest proletarian movement of the nineteenth century." Can we, therefore, faced with the necessity of finding a revolutionary way out of the present crisis, continue to ignore the lessons of this tremendous example ?

The conspiracy of silence on the part of the capitalists and their henchmen in regard to the Commune, particularly in regard to the conclusions which the fighting scientific revolutionaries, Marx and Engels, drew from it are understandable, and in this connection, to again quote Lenin, " now one has to ' excavate ' as it were in order to bring uncorrupted Marxism to the knowledge of the masses."

The articles, and extracts from the works of Lenin collected under the title *The Paris Commune* represent the results of his " excavations," and their elaboration and development in connection with the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917.

But of what vital interest, you will ask, are the events of 1871 to us living 60 years later ?

A reading of this booklet will answer the question to any worker sincerely anxious to clarify himself particularly on such questions as the rôle of the state, the meaning of revolution, and the implications of the transition from Capitalism to Socialism.

Lenin goes into great detail, quoting extensively from Marx and Engels to make these points clear, and combating the Plekhanovs, Kautskys, Bernsteins, &c., who have mutilated Marxism in this connection.

And to-day, when our Middleton Murrys are once again " reviving " and " revising " Marxism, when the I.L.P. is talking loudly about the necessity of " decisive transition from Capitalism to Socialism," and when the " Plebs " publishes Eden and Cedar Paul's superficial nonsense about the " Marxist conception of the State,"—it is more than ever necessary that revolutionary workers should study what Lenin learnt from the examination by Marx and Engels of the Paris Commune of 1871.

What is the principle and fundamental lesson of the Paris Commune which was of such enormous importance as to cause Marx and Engels to introduce a vital correction into the Communist Manifesto in 1872 ?

" It is," says Lenin, " that in relation to the state during a revolution it is necessary to break up the bureaucratic and military machine of the state."

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" The importance of the Commune," he says, " lies in the effort that was made to break up and destroy the capitalist state bureaucratic machine, the courts of justice, military and police apparatus, and to replace it by a self-governing mass organisation of workmen, making no distinction between legislative and executive powers. . . ." " That was," says Lenin, " the first world-historical step or stage in the development of the proletarian dictatorship." The second such step is " Soviet Power."

And so to-day, when the achievements of the Soviet Union are to some extent even " boosted " in such periodicals as the *New Leader*, it is necessary to be reminded of these essential facts, for to parade the achievements of the Soviet Union and to ignore its essential character as a proletarian dictatorship, achieved as the result of smashing up the capitalist state machine is the sheerest opportunism.

Similarly, the I.L.P. talk of the necessity for a " decisive transition from Capitalism to Socialism " *via* the House of Commons, should be contrasted with Lenin's statements (p. 14) that " in modern society, enslaved economically by capital, the proletariat cannot dominate politically unless it breaks the chains which fetter it to capital." This necessitates revolution, and he says (p. 44) " a revolution must consist, not in a new class ruling, governing by means of the *old* state machine, but in this class smashing this machine and ruling governing by means of a *new* machine. This fundamental idea of Marxism, Kautsky either hushes up or else has entirely failed to understand. . ."

With how much equal truth may these last words be quoted of many of our so-called Socialists and alleged Marxians !

Much space in this booklet is devoted by Lenin to the point that " bourgeois parliaments are an instrument of oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, are an institution of an hostile class, of the exploiting minority."

In dealing with the causes of defeat of the Commune, Lenin draws attention to the fact that " on the other hand, there was no worker's party, the working class . . . did not even clearly visualise its tasks and the methods of fulfilling them."

We are already living in 1932. The flag of the Commune of Paris waves over the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

One may say with equal truth that on the other hand this has been made possible by the existence of the workers (communist) party which led and to-day leads the workers of the Soviet Union to a clear visualisation of its tasks and the methods of fulfilling them. This great lesson of the " Paris Commune " is one that every worker in this country sincerely anxious for the victory of the social revolution must also face.

A study of this booklet will certainly help to clarify this and many other issues facing the earnest working-class revolutionary.

G. C.

[*Owing to extreme pressure on space we have been compelled to hold over a number of important articles, Publications Received, etc.*].

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